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# HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

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## AFGHANISTAN SPECIAL

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN:  
A REGIONAL CRISIS IN THE MAKING  
*Sudha Ratan*

INDIA FACTOR IN THE US SOUTH ASIA STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN  
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THE DRUG SITUATION AND THE PRACTICE OF  
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*Li Xinwei*

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**Editor : K. WARIKOO**

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## *Editor's Page*

Even though war against terror in Afghanistan was launched over eighteen years ago, many basic freedoms – from insecurity, fear and poverty are yet to be achieved. The battle between the forces of democratisation and those of destabilisation in post-Taliban Afghanistan is at its peak. Reports of ambushes, killings and bomb explosions across Afghanistan have been coming almost daily. The threat to security in Afghanistan is from the attacks by the resurgent Taliban and of late by IS extremists. The Taliban have strengthened and have been operating both from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistan continues its links and manipulation of the Taliban and allied groups. The 24<sup>th</sup> Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted recently to the UN Security Council (S/2019/570 dated 15 July 2019) stated that “Al-Qaida considers Afghanistan a continuing safe haven for its leadership relying on its long-standing and strong relationship with the Taliban leadership. Al-Qaida continues to cooperate with Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and the Haqqani network. Al-Qaida members continue to function routinely as military and religious instructors for the Taliban”. While both the US and Taliban claim to be making progress in the peace deal, there has been steep rise in attacks across Afghanistan, with over 1,500 people killed or injured in July 2019 alone.

The year 2018 witnessed an 11 per cent increase in civilian deaths as compared to that in 2017. As the UN report on human rights situation in Afghanistan (A/HRC/40/45 dated 28 January 2019) rightly pointed out that “The year 2018 began with two major attacks in Kabul alone in Jalalabad resulting in 143 civilian deaths and 265 injured between 20 and 27 January 2018.” On 20 January 2018 Taliban attacked Kabul’s Intercontinental Hotel killing more than 20 persons including 14 foreigners. On 27 January 2018 Taliban struck again blowing up an explosive laden ambulance in a busy Kabul street killing over 100 people. On 28 January 2018, 11 Afghan soldiers were killed and 16 others wounded by the IS attack near a military academy in Kabul. On 12 February 2018, 16 Afghan forces were killed by the Taliban in Helmand. On 19 February 2018, bodies

of 9 civilians abducted by militants in early 2017 were found in the eastern province of Nangarhar. In April 2018 the Taliban launched what it calls *Al Khandaq* jihadi offensive targeting Afghan national forces in Afghanistan. Burqa clad suicide bombers struck a Shia mosque in eastern Afghanistan on Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2018, as it was crowded with worshippers for their weekly prayers, killing 29 people and injuring over 80 persons. On 21 January 2019 the Taliban killed over 100 Afghan security forces inside the training centre in Maidan Shahr, 30 kms south-west of Kabul. On 5 February 2019 the Taliban attacked an army base in Kunduz, northerern Afghanistan killing 26 Afghan security forces.

The Taliban are desperately working to undermine the state and create chaos and instability in Afghanistan. While the negotiations between the US and Taliban are continuing, the Taliban have actually escalated the conflict by carrying out several deadly attacks killing hundreds of civilians and security personnel. The Taliban targeted schools and mosques during the election period to disrupt and undermine the electoral process. ISIL-Khorasan targeted the Shia Hazara Muslim minority, causing over 1,800 civilian casualties (including over 500 deaths), nearly double the number of casualties claimed by ISIL in 2017. According to February 2019 report of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 10,993 civilian casualties (3,804 people including 927 children killed and 7,189 injured) were documented in the year 2018, caused by suicide attacks, IED blasts etc. Another report of UNAMA titled *Increasing Harm to Afghan civilians from the Deliberate and Indiscriminate use of Improved Explosive Devices* documents a sharp increase in 2018 in the killings and maiming of Afghan civilians by suicide bombers and IEDs. It reports that "bombs were designed and placed to detonate among crowds of civilians to kill and maim Afghan men, women and children, destroy livelihoods, disrupt lives and create terror among the survivors". The report identifies the victims as students, players and spectators at cricket and wrestling matches, worshippers at mosques, humanitarian aid workers, journalists, medical personnel, education and civil government staff, civilians, election workers, men and women. Over 400 schools for both boys and girls have closed in the Taliban dominated areas of Afghanistan, due to attacks by the Taliban and threats to teachers, students and their families jeopardising the fate of over 4 million girls enrolled in schools and universities.<sup>1</sup> While the US and Taliban negotiators were meeting in Qatar, the Taliban assault and car bombing killed at least 40 people in Kabul on 1 July 2019, damaging a school and injuring over 105 persons including 51 students.<sup>2</sup> Six days later, the Taliban

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carried out a suicide bombing on a national intelligence complex in Ghazni province, killing at least a dozen people and injuring 180 others. In yet another attack on 27 July 2019 a powerful explosion hit central Kabul wounding Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's running mate Amrullah Saleh on the very first day of campaigning for the presidential elections. This attack demonstrated Taliban's desperation to thwart the forthcoming presidential election.<sup>3</sup> Again on 7 August 2019 the Taliban suicide car bomb attack in Kabul killed 14 people and wounded 145 others. The Taliban and ISIS have increased their attacks, the former pushing for the withdrawal of US forces and the latter exterminating the ethnic-religious minorities. The IS claimed responsibility for a suicide blast at a wedding reception in a minority Shia neighbourhood on 18 August 2019, which killed 80 people and injured over 180 persons. The IS brazenly stated that "its bomber had been able to infiltrate the reception and detonate his explosives in the crowd of infidels".<sup>4</sup>

Another aspect of the deteriorating situation is that the total opium poppy cultivation area in Afghanistan has been estimated by the latest UN Office on Drugs (UNODC) *Afghanistan Opium Survey of 2018*, at 263,000 hectares, which is 17 per cent higher than the level of 2014 representing an increase of 39,000 hectares. Most of the poppy cultivation took place in the southern region (69%) followed by the Western region (12%), Eastern region (8%) and northern region (7%).

While the negotiations between the US and Taliban are continuing, the conflict has actually escalated with recurrent deadly attacks killing hundreds of civilians and security personnel. International community needs to shed its ambivalence and evolve a concerted strategy to curb terrorism and extremism in and around Afghanistan by stopping their sources of funds, arms, logistics and training and ideological motivation. Indian policy has been to help in rebuilding the physical infrastructure in Afghanistan, training and scholarships for human resource and skill development and capacity building, building better connectivity for Afghanistan and enhancing trade and investment linkages with Afghanistan. The reconstruction of collapsed social and economic infrastructure and development of Afghanistan as the transit hub of regional trade and traffic, will help in putting the social and economic situation in Afghanistan back on tracks, though the process is cumbersome and long drawn. Intra-Afghan peace and consensus among various Afghan groups/stake holders is the sine qua non for lasting peace and stability.

Any attempts at peace and reconciliation should not be rushed and

should preserve the constitutional process and other gains of the last 18 years. It should also ensure independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. Such process should be based on principles of shunning violence and severing ties with international terror networks; accepting the Afghan Constitution; and honoring the rights of weaker sections of Afghan society, ethnic-religious minorities, women and children. In the current environment we have a situation where while a dialogue process between the US and the Taliban is underway, the latter has launched fresh offensives. To quote Khaled Ahmed, Consulting Editor, Newsweek, Pakistan, "the Taliban have warriors in their hordes who have come from the Middle East and Central Asia"; and there are ISIS-Daesh and Al Qaeda still operational in the country threatening all the three SAARC members".<sup>5</sup> While the peace process should be aimed at engaging and bringing together all the Afghan groups, it should isolate the extremist and terrorist networks which are bent upon recreating the Caliphate/Emirate in Afghanistan. During their talks with the Afghan politicians including former president Hamid Karzai at Moscow in February 2019, the head of the Taliban delegation Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai emphatically rejected the Kabul government constitution as invalid and demanded an Islamic constitution to be drafted by Islamic scholars.<sup>6</sup> Afghanistan's High Peace Council Secretary, Umer Daudzai underlined the major issues under discussion between the Taliban and the US Special Representative for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, as being: "the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Taliban's relationship with terrorist groups, intra-Afghan dialogue, ceasefire, and Taliban's relationship with Pakistan".<sup>7</sup> India supports the peace process, insisting that the Taliban shun violence and abide by the Afghan constitution and that the peace process be owned, led and controlled by the Afghans.

So ensuring sustainable security and peace in Afghanistan is a great challenge facing the international community. International community needs to shed its ambivalence and evolve a concerted strategy to curb terrorism and extremism in and around Afghanistan by stopping their sources of funds, arms, logistics and training and ideological motivation. The reconstruction of collapsed social and economic infrastructure and development of Afghanistan as the transit hub of regional trade and traffic, will help in putting the social and economic situation in Afghanistan back on tracks, though the process is cumbersome and long drawn. International agencies like United Nations, World Bank, European Union etc. need to implement the reconstruction programmes employing

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professional and committed cadres in coordination with the local agencies/ personnel. The future of Afghanistan with guarantees of peace, security and well being of its people hinges upon the success of reconciliation between rival ethnic/regional Afghan political groups and commanders, emergence of a balanced and broad-based stable government representing diverse ethnic, regional and minority interests, the setting up and effective functioning of law enforcement agencies, strengthening the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces by having a robust vetting process in place to prevent members of armed groups involved in crimes from being recruited by security or government institutions, on the speedy implementation of reconstruction of social, economic and education infrastructure, and on elimination of drugs and arms trafficking from Afghanistan.

**K. Warikoo**

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THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S  
POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN  
*A REGIONAL CRISIS IN THE MAKING*

SUDHA RATAN

The chaotic nature of President Trump's "America First" foreign policy has led some commentators to make a case for a "new world disorder" as the US withdraws from international agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Paris climate pact.<sup>1</sup> Others have argued that in a climate where the US is clearly moving away from the role of global leader and protector of the free world, states may decide to "hedge" their bets geo-politically by strengthening their own capabilities and finding ways to align themselves with regional powers.<sup>2</sup> The absence of a clear strategy and the erratic nature of policy coming out of Washington towards allies and adversaries is causing confusion and worry in many quarters.<sup>3</sup> It has also encouraged more opportunistic power plays from both Iran and Russia in places like Syria and raised concern about the US ability to counter China's President Xi Ping who is offering China's help in economic development and regional security as a way of implementing a new international relations based on "win-win cooperation" anchored in shared common interests and a common future.<sup>4</sup> In Afghanistan, President Trump's policy which is focused on extricating the US from its longest war is heightening insecurity about US intentions, causing regional actors to re-align their interests, and creating the potential for greater conflict in South and Central Asia.

UNPREDICTABLE POLICY, TROUBLING OUTCOMES

In an interview with the *New York Times* in 2016 Candidate Trump articulated a desire to play his foreign policy cards close to his chest. "We

need unpredictability,” he said and argued that an effective negotiator plays his cards close to his chest: no one is to know the bottom line and the ability to make a credible bluff is to be prized.<sup>5</sup> President Trump reiterated the same kind of thinking in August 2017 when he unveiled his new strategy for Afghanistan and emphasized “how counterproductive it is for the United States to announce the dates we intend to begin or end military options. ... Conditions on the ground—not arbitrary time tables—will guide our strategies from now on. America’s enemies must never know our plans or believe they can wait us out.”<sup>6</sup> In the same speech, he put forward a transactional approach to foreign policy by calling out India for having made billions of dollars in trade with the United States and said that that country had to do more especially in the area of economic assistance and development.<sup>7</sup> The speech puzzled many since India is the most generous regional donor to Afghanistan with \$2 billion already provided and over \$1 billion pledged in the coming years. The speech did make clear the President’s interest in upending traditional approaches to foreign policy and redefining national security in more purely economic terms with allies (like India) as well as adversaries (like China) being asked to answer the question of “what have you done for us lately?”

In Afghanistan (as in Syria), Trump has created uncertainty by stating his interest in withdrawing troops (seen as costly and ultimately unproductive) while at the same time recognizing that US interests lie in stopping “... the resurgence of safe havens that enable terrorists to threaten America....”<sup>8</sup> US military commanders have responded to President Trump by moving quickly to consolidate the gains they have made and put in plans for “finishing the job.” The military is currently building up the strength of Afghan units with a re-energized air campaign and new advisory units have been emplaced with Afghan army battalions to counter attacks by the Taliban and the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K). It is not clear that this will suffice given the gains made by the Taliban in recent years. In November 2015, the Afghan government controlled about 72% of the country while the insurgents had influence in 7%. USAF data released to CNN indicates that those numbers changed in 2017 to 56% under Afghan government control and 30% under Taliban control.<sup>9</sup> Unofficial estimates of Taliban influence/control go up to 70%. Violence has continued to accelerate as the January 2018 bombings on the Intercontinental Hotel and other attacks in Kabul show the Taliban and IS-K making headway even in the heavily guarded capital city. At the same time, the US military is having to deal with a re-energized IS-K

which has explicitly pledged its allegiance to the head of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr Baghdadi. In April 2017 the US military attempted to clear IS-K fighters from a cave complex in Achin with a so called mother of all bombs (MOAB) which was not successful.

The task of consolidating US military gains is complicated by the Trump Administration's interest in negotiating with the Taliban. "The U.S. policy in Afghanistan is working," former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Hayley told reporters. "We're closer to talks with the Taliban and the peace process than we've seen before." This was borne out in fall 2018 when the Trump Administration appointed veteran US diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad as its special envoy for Afghan peace. The US team has been engaged ever since in negotiations with Taliban representatives at their office in Qatar.

The US is not alone in making overtures to the Taliban. In January 2019 Moscow hosted a peace-themed meeting which was broadcast live and included an array of Afghans including Taliban leaders and anti-Soviet militia leaders and opposition politicians. Afghanistan, Iran, China and Russia have all referenced the need to bring "moderate" elements in the Taliban to the negotiating table in order to bring peace. The moderate Taliban label is a term used for any Taliban commander who takes the position that a military victory is not possible – once these individuals are identified the challenge is to see how much influence they can bring to a formal peace process.

Talking to the Taliban, however, raises more uncertainty within Afghanistan. Noticeably absent in all these talks of peace is the Afghan government since the Taliban has steadfastly refused to meet or talk with Afghan government officials. The fact that the Taliban is predominantly Pashtun is also viewed with concern by the Tajiks and the Uzbeks who make up a large number of the Afghan National Army.<sup>10</sup> That concern led in 2017 to the creation of a Coalition for the Salvation of Afghanistan comprising Tajik warlord turned provincial governor of Balkh province, Attah Mohammad Noor, ethnic Hazara leader and deputy to the government's chief executive, Mohammed Mohaqiq, and Uzbek warlord Abdur Rashid Dostum (in exile in Turkey) who came together uniting three of Afghanistan's three largest ethnic minorities against the supposed tyranny of the government of President Ashraf Ghani who is a Pashtun.<sup>11</sup>

The Trump Administration has relied on the military for making policy on Afghanistan because the weakening of the State Department has made diplomatic initiatives difficult to pursue in every region. In September 2017,

the Trump Administration dissolved the office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) which was charged with working on reconciliation efforts with the Taliban. The work of the office was folded into the broader South and Central Asia bureau, a task facilitated by the fact that many of the employees of that office were working on a contractual basis which made it easy to not renew their services. Coupled with the broader cuts to the State Department budget and the failure to fill senior level policy positions there is little chance that the Trump Administration will be able to make any progress on the diplomatic front. The situation is complicated by the turnover at the top – the recent firing of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the appointment of the CIA Director Mike Pompeo to that position as well as the replacement of National Security Advisor, H.R. McMaster (author of Trump’s Afghanistan strategy) with John Bolton whose interests lie more in Iraq and North Korea make it likely that the climate of uncertainty surrounding US policy in Afghanistan is likely to continue.

The appointment of Mr. Khalilzad as special envoy is an attempt to put peace negotiations with the Taliban on the fast track but it comes with its own attendant risks. His two year tenure as special envoy to Afghanistan in 2003 was controversial because he became deeply involved in the political maneuvering which led to Hamid Karzai becoming president and he is also seen as a critic of the Pakistani role in destabilizing Afghanistan. This could pose a problem as Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan who was elected last year has made it clear that Islamabad intends to play a “constructive” role in the negotiations – the Afghan Taliban accepted an invitation to meet Pakistani leaders in February 2019 for the first time since 2001.

### **REGIONAL REALIGNMENT, GREATER INSECURITY**

The Trump Administration’s rhetoric on Afghanistan is leading regional powers like China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and India to prepare for a US exit from the region by aligning their interests while exploring security options in the event of a US withdrawal. The defeat of the Islamic State in Syria and the exodus of fighters from the region into Afghanistan and Pakistan, the concern about the weakness of the government in Kabul as well as the presence of regional mechanisms like the Shanghai Cooperation Council (SCO) provide some common grounds for cooperation. However, these conditions can also be used by states to secure their own interests in

the region in the absence of a clear US strategy.

China, Iran and Russia recognize the problem posed by the growth of the IS-K which is comprised of former members of the Taliban, Al Qaeda as well as Central Asian groups like the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)*. The IS-K's claim to an Emirate comprising parts of Iran, three Central Asian Republics, Afghanistan, Pakistan and in some maps parts of Kashmir in India and Xinjiang in western China is helping to realign the interests of these states. China is dealing with a restive Muslim Uighur population in Xinjiang where a vicious government crackdown after 2009 led young Uighurs to join the IS in Iraq and Syria in droves. Some of these young men have now returned to join the IS-K. China's interest is also due to its \$60 billion Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which has resulted in projects scattered across the region. Beijing has set up a trilateral contact group with Afghanistan and Pakistan to combat terrorism and has made it clear that it will support Afghan government led efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict with the Taliban. China's role is important since it is a staunch ally of Pakistan and has considerable influence in Islamabad partly due to the investments it has made as part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is part of the BRI. China is viewed by Pakistan as an honest neighbor with the ability to reach understandings with Russia, the US, as well as Afghanistan.

Iran and China have also moved closer due to shared concerns about the IS-K and its potential to spread a particularly virulent Islamist ideology in the region. Iran views the idea of an Islamic Caliphate as a distortion of the faith and inimical to its interest in the region. The Islamic State attack on the Iranian parliament and the shrine of Khomeini in 2017 served as a timely reminder of this threat. For Beijing stabilization is of interest because of its investments in the BRI and the two countries in November 2016 signed a military cooperation agreement which allows them to engage in military to military exchanges as well as joint counterterrorism training. Iran's concern about IS-K can be seen in its move to cement relation with Pakistan which it views as essential for any solution to the problems in Afghanistan. In the past this would have been difficult because Iran and India have traditionally worked together. However, as India has moved closer to the United States and Israel, Iran has begun to take on a more adversarial tone vis-à-vis India. This was evident in 2017 when Iran criticized Indian military actions in Kashmir (much to the delight of Pakistan) and rejected Trump's call for greater Indian engagement in Afghanistan. Recently Iran also announced that it was offering both

Pakistan and China the opportunity to participate in the Chabahar seaport project which India is building in order to bypass Pakistan – a decision calculated to make New Delhi nervous.<sup>12</sup> However, Iran's relations with Pakistan are not without problems. When Pakistan joined the 41 country Islamic Military Alliance (IMA) set up by Saudi Arabia, it had to reassure Iran that it was not joining an anti-Shia body. It followed up by signing a counterterrorism pact with Iran to address the problems posed by the IS-K.<sup>13</sup>

Russian concerns about IS-K have led it to work with China, Iran as well as Pakistan to limit the growth of Islamist movements which could spill into the five Central Asian Republics on its southern flank. Republics like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have joined Russia and China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and conduct regular military and counterterrorism exercises with both. Russia is the dominant military partner while China takes the lead in economic activities – a division of labor that has worked to offset any tensions in the immediate future. Russian concerns about the infiltration of IS-K into Afghanistan has also led to increased cooperation with Pakistan in recent years. As a result of the work done by the Russia Pakistan Joint Working Group (JWG), a Russian military delegation visited North Waziristan in the tribal belt in March 2017, months after Russia and Pakistan conducted joint military drills. The seventh meeting of the JWG held in March 2018 ended with both countries expressing concern about the rising threat posed by IS. It is not surprising then that in February 2018, Moscow appointed an honorary consul in the city of Peshawar. The heightened cooperation between Russia and Pakistan is literally visible in the addition of Russian language signage in the tribal belt and even around Islamabad. This is coming at a time when the US has blocked the release of military assistance funds to Pakistan pending certification that it has taken specific actions against the terror networks it is accused of harboring.

India is the odd man out in the aligning of interests in the region. It has a long and troubled relationship with both China and Pakistan and has fought wars with both. Its relations with Iran have become more difficult in recent years as it has deepened its relationship with the United States. However, it is also one of the most financially invested regional powers in Afghanistan and is, therefore, critical for long term stability in the country. The Trump call for increased Indian involvement in Afghanistan led to greater tension between Delhi and Islamabad who often accuse each other of supporting the militants responsible for

instability in that country. India's admission (as a result of Russian intervention) to the SCO in 2017 coincided with Pakistan's admission (as a result of China's intervention) and there is a possibility that the inclusion of these two countries to an organization whose goals explicitly call on member states to coordinate activities against the three evils of terrorism, separatism, and extremism could help identify common ground. However, relations between both countries have deteriorated sharply in the wake of the recent suicide attack in Pulwama district in Jammu and Kashmir which led to the death of 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel. Pakistan based *Jaish-e-Mohammed* (which is widely viewed as a creation of the Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency) claimed responsibility for the attack leading the Indian government to weigh military and non-military responses. Deteriorating India-Pakistan relations is going to be a confounding factor for the Trump Administration as it tries to exit Afghanistan.

The security concerns in the region are exacerbated by the growing fear that the government of President Ghani is not capable of keeping control of its territory and containing the Taliban as well as IS-K. China and Russia recognize the importance of the role Pakistan must play in reigning in the militants who operate from within its borders. Both countries have adopted a two track policy: providing support for the Afghan government while trying to get Pakistan on board vis-a-vis the Taliban. China has tried to use its influence in both countries to increase cooperation between the two in order to promote effective counterterrorism mechanisms. The lack of success with these efforts has led China to pursue negotiating with the Taliban as a strategy and it was very supportive of President Ghani's call for the Taliban to come to the table earlier this year. Russia for its part has involved itself in hosting multilateral talks on Afghanistan since 2016 when it parted ways with NATO on policy in Afghanistan. As these efforts have stalled, it too has raised the possibility of negotiating with the Taliban. Moscow recently offered to host US talks with the Taliban (banned as a terrorist group in Russia) just as US military commanders accuse it of arming the group. Russia and the Taliban reject these accusations and say that most of the weapons are flowing from stockpiles of the Afghan army and the police. If the claim is true, it is yet another sign of the limited strength of Afghan institutions.

Iran is the least invested in the Ghani government which it sees as being weak and incapable of managing the ethnically diverse Afghan

state. Iran continues to maintain links with powerful Tajik and Uzbek leaders who are not happy with the Ghani government. It is accused of providing financial and military support for the Taliban who it sees as a proxy to fight the rise of the IS while at the same time raising the costs of continued western military intervention in Afghanistan. Iran has denied these charges but the death of Taliban leader Mullah Mansour in a 2016 drone strike in Baluchistan, as he was returning from a meeting with Iranian officials, makes it difficult to believe the denials.

The inability of the Afghan government to address security is also having a negative impact on economic development which could turn the economy around. Projects like the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline which if completed will bring much needed natural gas to South Asia, face the risk of attacks from groups like Al-Qaeda, IS-K, the Pakistani Taliban and Baloch separatists among others. Given the security challenge, it is not clear who is going to put forward the funds for projects like TAPI which is estimated to cost \$10 billion.

The regional powers have very little interest in taking on the role being played by the US military in Afghanistan. China is willing to help the Afghan government improve its own capabilities as became clear when Beijing signed an agreement in December 2017 to build a base in northern Afghanistan and provide assistance to the Afghan National Army by way of training and resources.<sup>14</sup> However a larger role is unlikely because China is much more interested in the economic initiatives underway as part of the BRI and because it has little interest in antagonizing Russia with whom it partners in the SCO.

Russia for its part has little interest in putting boots on the ground in Afghanistan after its ten year experience in that country between 1979-1989. The most that can be expected is that Russia will continue to invest militarily in the Central Asian Republics in order to prevent problems in Afghanistan from spilling over into its neighborhood. Iran for its part is interested in seeing the United States leave the region but will limit its military commitment to adventurism of the sort we are seeing currently with its support for the Taliban.

Pakistan and India have the least interest in seeing the US leave the region. For Pakistan, the US military presence is a source of revenue to the military and the larger economy and provides an additional safeguard against India. The uncertainty created by President Trump's complaints about Pakistan have simply made it even more likely that its support for groups like the Haqqani network will not be disappearing any time soon.

Funding the insurgents is guaranteed to keep Afghanistan destabilized – and hopefully keep the US engaged in the region. India for its part sees the US military presence as essential if it is to focus on economic development issues in Afghanistan. India will not put boots on the ground because it has its own failed experience with intervention in Sri Lanka in the 1980's and the geography of the region precludes an easy way to do this given the uneasy relationship with Pakistan and Iran.

The only viable regional mechanism for taking on security issues in Afghanistan post-US departure is through the SCO since all of the major regional powers are now in that organization. But given the existing antagonisms between China and India, India and Pakistan among others and the fact that Afghanistan only has observer status in the group, this seems unlikely. This is unfortunate given that the Trump Administration's policies in the region are laying the groundwork for more conflict in the years ahead.

### **CONFLICTING POLICIES, NO REGIONAL STRATEGY**

The Trump Administration policy of increasing military forces on the ground while trying to get negotiations started with the Taliban is based on the assumption that getting that group to the table will help stabilize the security situation and put Afghanistan on the road to peace. At the same time the US Administration policies towards China, India, Iran, Russia and Pakistan, all states interested in stabilization in Afghanistan, are creating conditions for more not less conflict.

China and India share the US interest in supporting the government of President Ghani and in aiding economic development in Afghanistan. Both countries are essential for the stability of Afghanistan but they are divided by a history of suspicion and conflict over border issues, India's support for the Dalai Lama and China's long term support for Pakistan. The Trump Administration's policies in the region are adding to the difficult relations between the two powers. Mr. Trump's support for the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad), a loose alliance of the US, Australia, Japan and India, four maritime democracies as well as his use of the term "Indo-Pacific" instead of Asia-Pacific is signaling the US interest in using India to off-set China's military and economic power in the region. China views the Quad as an anti-Chinese alliance aimed at checking its power projections in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>15</sup>

China and India are also at cross-purposes on economic development

assistance to Afghanistan. China has expressed interest in including Afghanistan in the CPEC but at least one of those projects is in Pakistan held Kashmir and this led India to boycott a BRI summit last year. This is coming at a time when China's BRI projects in some countries are regarded as examples of "debt-trap diplomacy," after Sri Lanka handed over the strategic port of Hambantota in a 99 year lease to China as part of a debt forgiveness plan to settle \$8 billion owed to Chinese state-controlled firms. The concerns raised by this have caused Pakistan and Nepal in recent months to announce that they are cancelling deals for Chinese funded dams for debt related reasons.<sup>16</sup> Trump in his policy speech on Afghanistan in 2017 indicated the US interest in countering China's influence by asking India to increase its economic footprint in Afghanistan. New Delhi followed up by announcing over 100 high impact projects in 31 Afghan provinces but its ability to follow through is highly dependent on an improved security environment in Afghanistan. The policy initiatives from Washington are simply adding to the complications of Sino-Indian relations which have suffered in recent months as a result of border disputes near Bhutan.

US relations with Iran are in deep trouble due to the conflict in Syria, the Trump Administration's withdrawal from the nuclear deal signed by the Obama Administration as well as US support of Saudi Arabia and its allies in the region. Teheran is only too willing to cause trouble for the US in Afghanistan. Grand Ayatollah Khamenei in a speech on his website in March 2018 accused the US of helping to transfer the IS to Afghanistan and of being responsible for a rash of terrorist attacks in that country.<sup>17</sup> While these are false accusations they lay the groundwork for Iran to support efforts directed against IS-K. Iran is known to be providing support for the Taliban and The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has helped create an Afghan Shi'ite militia (the *Liwa Fatemiyoun*) which has gained fighting experience in Syria. It is possible that in the future while IS-K poses a threat inside Afghanistan, groups funded by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps could also contribute to further destabilization in the future.

The US and Russia are also diverging on policy towards Afghanistan. The United States continues to stay focused on the government in Kabul and improving the capabilities of the Afghan security forces while Russia is working with the Afghan government as well as reaching out to other actors like the Taliban and former warlords.<sup>18</sup> For Russia the main concern is to limit the reach of the IS-K and to protect its allies in the Central Asian Republics from Islamist insurgencies. Moscow has moved closer to Iran as well as Pakistan in trying to achieve this goal. Russia and Iran have

provided arms and logistical training to the Taliban in a bid to limit the growth of IS-K which is perceived as a bigger threat to their own interests in the region. With Pakistan, Moscow set up the Russia Pakistan Joint Working Group and this led in March 2017 to the first ever visit by a Russian military delegation to North Waziristan in the tribal belt, months after Russia and Pakistan conducted joint military drills. The seventh meeting of the JWG held in March 2018 ended with both countries expressing concern about the rising threat posed by IS-K. The Russian move to establish closer linkages with Pakistan and Iran are of concern to New Delhi which has in the past off-set Pakistan's ties to China with its own ties to Russia and more recently the United States.

Trump Administration policy towards Pakistan is another complication. Both the US Congress and President Trump agree that Pakistan has not acted in good faith and has provided sanctuaries for terrorist groups in its territory. The release of \$900 million in Coalition Support Funds approved in the 2017 defense spending legislation has been blocked pending certification that Pakistan has taken specific actions against the Haqqani network – the last time Pakistan received funds was in March 2017 from the 2016 defense spending legislation. In addition, in January 2018, the State Department announced that it was suspending security assistance to Pakistan – civilian development and economic assistance would, however, continue. The Pakistani government expressed its displeasure and indicated that these moves would be counterproductive to US counterterrorism policy in the region. Since the main commander networks in the Afghan insurgency have historically maintained a presence in Pakistan, this is a significant roadblock to attempts to jumpstart the negotiation process and provides Islamabad the opportunity to derail the process.

The US interest in bringing the Taliban into the peace process contributed to the decision in early 2018 by the government of President Ghani to offer to recognize the Taliban as a legitimate political actor and to begin negotiations.<sup>19</sup> The government in Kabul made it clear that negotiations were only possible if violence declined, the Taliban agreed to abide by the Afghan constitution, and cut its ties to Al Qaeda – none of which appears to be agreeable to the current Taliban leader Maulvi Haibatullah Akhund. In the meantime, the government's position is rendered awkward by the fact that it made a peace deal in 2016 with the *Hezb-i-Islami* leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar who is a Pashtun Islamist warlord and accused of terrible atrocities in the Afghan civil war in the

1990's. This has raised concerns among non-Pashtun groups and the Shia Hazara community as well as ordinary Afghans who see him as a divisive force. The alliance has definitely weakened the Afghan government's credibility with minority groups in the country as indicated by the formation of the Coalition for the Salvation of Afghanistan in 2017.

The Afghan government for its part has complained that when individual Taliban leaders are identified as being willing to negotiate, they seem to disappear or are killed – and Pakistan is blamed for this state of affairs. The death of Mullah Mansour in 2016 was the result of a US drone strike tacitly approved by Pakistan as he was returning from talking to Iranian and Russian officials who have sided with the Taliban in order to check the influence of the Islamic State. The death of Mansour had angered and accelerated the departure of some Taliban leaders from Pakistani controlled areas into southern Afghanistan. The Taliban for their part were able to get the US to put pressure on Pakistan to release Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a co-founder of the Taliban who was arrested in Karachi in 2010. He was released in October 2018 and now heads up the Taliban political office in Qatar. The Taliban peace negotiations with the US in Qatar, their meetings in Moscow with opposition Afghan politicians, and their acceptance of Pakistani involvement has led to more tensions between the Afghan and Pakistani governments. At a time when the Taliban refuses to talk to the Afghan government who they say are American puppets, the Taliban leader Maulvi Haibatullah Akhund is said to be hiding in Pakistan making Pakistani assistance in the negotiating process all the more important. Given the current state of US- Pakistan relations, this support is not likely to materialize and it is clear that the Trump Administration's erratic policies towards the other regional powers will complicate a successful exit for the United States from Afghanistan.

### CONCLUSION

A US departure from Afghanistan in the current environment is likely to result in increased intervention by Iran (in the western provinces), China and Russia (especially in the northern provinces) and Pakistan which will continue its role as the sponsor/protector for the Taliban. However, none of these countries wishes to assume the responsibility for guaranteeing the stability of Afghanistan. And in the absence of a competent and responsible Afghan government the Trump administration is poised to turn Afghanistan over to the Taliban – after seventeen years and billions

of dollars aimed at restoring democratic government to that country. The lack of a serious and coherent US strategy for Afghanistan which integrates local and regional stake holders has put the Taliban in a commanding position to oversee a new age of uncertainty for a country and a people who have already suffered more than their fair share of violence.

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# INDIA FACTOR IN THE US SOUTH ASIA STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN

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## ABSTRACT

*The Afghan government, along with the United States (US) does not have, what it takes to substantially win against the Taliban on the battlefield, but they do not want to lose either. So, the new U.S. strategy for Afghanistan that has come after much reviews and assessment among Trump's inner circle of advisers is designed to avoid losing, rather than winning in Afghanistan. From a presidential candidate who believed that the US should pull out immediately from Afghanistan to a president who has now owned the war publicly, President Trump has come a long way in a short time. Supporting the government sustainability in Afghanistan has been a main pillar for not losing the battlefield to the Taliban. To this end India's role as all round friend for Afghanistan has been acknowledged in the US new South Asia policy. How Afghanistan-US- India will deal with the situation in Afghanistan and South Asia, is the question. Furthermore, playing a prominent role in materializing the South Asia policy, despite being a challenge for India, it is an opportunity for this country to have a potential full alliance with US.*

## INTRODUCTION

The U.S. has contributed more than \$126 billion in various forms of aid to Afghanistan over the past decade and a half, from building up and sustaining the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) to economic development. This assistance has increased Afghan government capacity, but prospects for the stability in Afghanistan appear distant. President Trump announced what he termed "A New Strategy" for Afghanistan and South Asia on 21 August 2017 that prioritizes "Fighting to Win" without setting an exit time line, downplays "Nation Building," and includes a stronger line against Pakistan. It called for a larger role for

India, and deployment of additional troops to Afghanistan. As a result, a series of large-scale Taliban-linked attacks in urban areas in late 2017 and early 2018 probably were their response to the new U.S. strategy. Administration officials stated that a political settlement is the end goal of the U.S. strategy, but sporadic efforts by the Afghan government and others to mitigate and eventually end the conflict through peace talks have been complicated by ethnic divisions, political rivalries and the unsettled military situation. This article briefly examines the evolution of U.S. – Afghanistan relations, both before and after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It sheds light on the shift in US policies towards Afghanistan after 9/11 and during the Presidencies of Bush, Obama and Trump. Finally, it illustrates the US South Asia policy for Afghanistan and India factor in this regard.

### THE EVOLUTION OF US – AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS

The US granted formal recognition to the government of Afghanistan and established its first legation in Afghanistan in 1948. Similarly Afghanistan set up its embassy in the US and the US policy towards Afghanistan has experienced a precise up and down posture. During the cold war, the main objective of US policy in Afghanistan was to contain Communism by forming military alliances around former Soviet Union and communist China. In response to Afghanistan's request to the US for providing economic and arms aid, the US wanted Afghanistan to have an alliance with Pakistan and Iran as a prerequisite for the delivery of aid. However, the US provided aid to Afghanistan in order to show its presence.

During the period 1960 to 1970, Afghanistan became a peaceful battleground of the Cold War rivalry between the Soviets and Americans, being based on their respective foreign aid programmes. Nonetheless, Pakistan factor always played a major role behind the deliberate and ambiguous US commitment towards Afghanistan. In 1971, American policy objective toward Afghanistan was based on the fact that Afghanistan was not an important trading partner of the US, it did not locate the way it could serve linking US trade to other countries, US did not have defense ties and commitment with Afghanistan nor did it provide the US intelligence or scientific facilities. However, the Soviet military and political presence in Afghanistan was viewed to be against American interests. To this end it was vital for the US to:

1. Preserve Afghanistan's independence and territorial integrity,
2. Prevent the Soviet influence in Afghanistan so that Afghanistan should not lose its freedom of action,
3. Improve the ties between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran as an alliance against the Soviets in the region.

Consequently, the US policy toward Afghanistan continued to be cordial toward Afghanistan until the Saur Revolution in 1978. However, the US policy was ruptured and its military and economic assistance program for Afghanistan was terminated when the US Ambassador Adolph Dubs was killed on February 14, 1979 in Afghanistan<sup>1</sup>. An added source of irritation for the Americans was the regime's proximity with the Soviet Union and eventually the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. The US policy shifted from being supportive to the challenger of the regime in Afghanistan.

### THE SOVIET INTERVENTION: 1979-1989 AND US POLICY TOWARD AFGHANISTAN

Following the April 27, 1978 coup and formation of the democratic regime in Afghanistan, the US pursued its influence in Afghanistan by recognizing the democratic republic. However, killing of the US ambassador in Afghanistan and invasion of the country by former Soviet Union in 25 December 1979, prompted the US to shift its policy. It now supported the already established national rescue front of seven Islamic organizations<sup>2</sup>. The invasion of Afghanistan provided ideological legitimacy for the insurgents and led them to resist the invading forces through invoking the Islamic principle of *Jihad*.<sup>3</sup> This marked the beginning of anti-Soviet *Jihad* in Afghanistan<sup>4</sup>.

For the US, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was considered a direct threat to its global interest and security. In January 1980, right after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in his speech to the US Congress, President Carter stated:

“Three basic developments have helped to shape our challenges: the steady growth and increased projection of Soviet military power beyond its own borders; the overwhelming dependence of the Western democracies on oil supplies from the Middle East; and the press of social and religious and economic and political change in the many nations of the developing world: Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United

States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force".<sup>5</sup>

Concerned over the Soviet influence in Persian Gulf and the warm water ports of the Arabian Sea, USA started a propaganda crusade against the Soviet Union. The US followed two sets of policy toward the former Soviet Union and pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan. The first policy was to undertake collective military measures against the Soviet Union and the second was to have policy of resistance. The US policy makers chose the resistance policy to impose military and economic costs on the Soviet Union to diminish Soviet influence in Afghanistan and the region around warm waters.<sup>6</sup> To materialize the said policy, the US deemed it necessary to ally itself with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan was the key to implement the US covert aid to Afghan *Mujahideen*. It supported Afghan *Mujahideen* for three reasons: first, to be recognized as the defender of Islam; second to maintain its own security requirement because there was no guarantee that Soviet Union after occupying Afghanistan may march towards Indian Ocean; and third, to maintain its economic deficiencies through US financial aid.<sup>7</sup> To avoid direct confrontation with the Soviet Union, the U.S. and Pakistan supported guerrilla warfare option to turn Afghanistan into a graveyard for the Soviet forces, an objective and approach that was common within US and Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan. The *Mujahideen* were employed and trained to conduct guerrilla warfare. As stated by Brigadier Mohammed Yousaf, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) member and director of covert operations in Afghanistan, the strategy to fight the Soviets and the pro-Soviet government in Kabul was to create a tough and challenging environment for the Soviets and keep war consistent at a particular degree.<sup>8</sup> The US started delivering systematic support to *Mujahideen* in Pakistan. In 1979 the US offered an initial \$400 million US dollars military aid to Pakistan which led to the partnership of cooperation between Pakistan's ISI and US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) over Afghanistan. The amount was increased to \$3 billion US dollars by 1981, which eventually brought Pakistan fully on board on the Afghanistan issue.<sup>9</sup> On January 10, 1980, right after fourteen days of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the first batch of lethal weapons was delivered to Pakistan.<sup>10</sup> The weapons and equipment provided to the *Mujahideen* were the same which were used by Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup>

During 1980, the *Mujahideen* resistance guerrilla warfare cost American taxpayers over \$3 billion.<sup>12</sup> By 1987, the US military assistance to *Mujahideen* reached \$700 million<sup>13</sup> per annum. During nine years military

operation in Afghanistan, total money and the plenty of weapons including mines, Stingers and Snipers, which defeated the Soviet forces, left Afghanistan with over one million deaths and more land mines per capita among other countries in the world<sup>14</sup>.

Consequently, due to several factors such as: the ascent of Mikhael Gorbachev to the leadership of the Communist Party of Soviet Union in 1985; unpopularity of war at home and the Soviet fear of losing its credibility as the patron of anti-colonialism among the developing world<sup>15</sup>; intensive resistance by *Mujahideen*; and finally, strong opposition by the international community such as Organization of Islamic Conference, Non-aligned movement and United Nations against the Soviet invasion, the Soviet Union endorsed the Geneva accord in 1989, which ratified the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan followed by a political settlement and non-aligned status of Afghanistan<sup>16</sup>. However, the US continued its assistance to the *Mujahideen* till Moscow stopped supporting the government of President Najibullah and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) continued to support the *Mujahideen*<sup>17</sup>. On January 1, 1992 Gorbachev cut off assistance to the Afghan government, following which CIA's legal authority for covert action in Afghanistan ended. Yet, the US did not have an ambassador in Afghanistan for almost a decade until the fall of the Taliban. In effect, the US policy in Afghanistan became its Pakistan policy, or at least was subordinated to Pakistan policy by virtue of more pressing issues in the US-Pakistani relations<sup>18</sup>.

The US covert war in Afghanistan failed to create a secure life both for the Americans and Afghans. It resulted in the spread of terrorist and extremist acts both within and beyond the boundaries of Afghanistan. Extremists with links to the Afghan *Jihad* have been linked to numerous acts of terrorism all over the world<sup>19</sup>, The 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon was the precise example.

### US STRATEGY AFTER 9/11

After the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) troops entered Afghanistan to fight against Al Qaeda and to promote democracy in the country. Their objectives were and continue to be, the eradication of terrorism and maintenance of security. As stated by President Bush in his radio address right after 9/11 attack, "we plan to eradicate the evil of terrorism" to maintain security in Afghanistan and the world in general<sup>20</sup>.

As a result of 9/11 terrorist attack, the Bush administration waged 'Global War on Terror' and gave it top priority in the US foreign policy, which underwent a radical change<sup>21</sup>. The US diplomatic engagement with many countries of the world particularly in South Asia can be considered as the apparent example of dramatic shift in US foreign policy since 9/11. According to Fraser Cameron, after 9/11 the "US took advantage of the attacks to strengthen ties with Russia, China, Turkey and other countries of the world"<sup>22</sup>. However, a particular focus was put on the neighboring countries of Afghanistan more specifically on India and Pakistan.

Pakistan as the supporter of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was economically and politically sanctioned by Washington during 1998. However, after 9/11, the sanctions on Pakistan were lifted and Islamabad committed its cooperation with NATO in the war on terror<sup>23</sup>. In addition, Pakistan, being a nuclear power with its unstable political situation, became the main area of concern for America<sup>24</sup>. In case of India, before 9/11 the relations between India and the US were not normal and in 1998 certain economic sanctions were imposed on India by America in response to India's nuclear test<sup>25</sup>. Eventually, after 9/11, India became one of the great supporters of the US war on terror. According to Banlaoi, since the Vietnam war, security analysts depicted the relations between South Asia and the US as a "policy without a strategy". However, after 9/11 the US emphasised on having close diplomatic relations with South Asia, not only to destroy terrorism but to encircle China strategically<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, it was considered difficult for the US to win the war on terror without the support of South Asian countries mainly India and Pakistan. Thus, a tactical shift in the diplomatic relations with these countries was essential. The US engagement with the South Asian countries after 9/11 "presents a significant shift in American's global priorities" and can be considered a diplomatic shift in US foreign policy toward Afghanistan and South Asia region<sup>27</sup>.

The US and NATO under the framework of operation enduring freedom had initial achievements in defeating the Taliban and Al Qaeda. However, after 2007 the Taliban and other terrorist networks regrouped and intensely challenged the regional security<sup>28</sup>. As such the Bush administration failed to achieve the very basic objective of U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

### U.S. AF-PAK STRATEGY UNDER OBAMA'S ADMINISTRATION

During Obama's administration, the U.S. considering the domestic, regional and global security environment in Afghanistan and the region, pursued following three main interests in Afghanistan and the region: (1) Fighting and eliminating Al Qaeda; (2) Continue rebuilding and rehabilitation of Afghanistan; (3) Regionalize strategy<sup>29</sup>. In pursuit of these interests, President Barack Obama opted for a more multilateral approach by providing the anti-terror campaign a new ingredient called Af-Pak Strategy. On March 27, 2009, President Obama criticized President Bush administration's policy in Afghanistan stating that the policy had made the situation worse in Af-Pak region and led to the establishment of safe sanctuary for the terrorists<sup>30</sup>. He labeled Afghanistan and Pakistan as one area of operation and declared the Af-Pak Policy-I on 27 March and Af-Pak II on December 2, 2009.<sup>31</sup>

According to Katzman, the Af-Pak strategy was designed to pursue and achieve the following objectives:

- i. Devastate the terrorist networks in Af-Pak region and lessen their capacity to launch worldwide terrorist activities.
- ii. Establish a strong government in Afghanistan.
- iii. Provide training facilities to Afghan security forces for improvement in their counter insurgency capabilities in order to make them less dependent upon U.S. assistance.
- iv. Get the support from international community to accomplish these objectives.
- v. Additional troops will be dispatched to Afghanistan to cover safety arrangements in the Af-Pak region.
- vi. Encourage reconciliation with the moderate Taliban figureheads that acknowledge the Constitution of Afghanistan and are ready to stop the terrorist activities.
- vii. Provide military aid to Pakistan of 1.5 billion US dollars per year for the period of next five years in order to destroy terrorist networks in their country, particularly in the border areas.
- viii. "Reconstruction Opportunity Zones" will be created in Afghanistan and Pakistan with the help of U.S. for economic development of the region.
- ix. Create "Contact Group" comprising all stake holders whose safety is associated with Afghanistan, just like NATO allies, Central Asian Republics, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, India and China<sup>32</sup>.

The Af-Pak strategy brought about a major shift in the tactics and goals of the U.S. led counter insurgency warfare in Afghanistan. The U.S. realized that the central problem before the success of counter insurgency policy in Afghanistan is the Pakistan army support to the irregular warfare in South Asia as an instrument of national security policy. Thus, Pakistan's dual approach of practicing toughness towards homegrown domestic terrorists and leniency toward home-based regional terrorists was the main concern for the U.S.<sup>33</sup> In order to get maximum results and realize the objective of Af-Pak strategy, US worked with all rudiments of global influence such as political, informational, military and financial resources. The surge of U.S. troops in Afghanistan was done and reconciliation with moderate Taliban was started. By late 2009, the US drone attacks in Pakistan's tribal areas were intensified. As per the Kerry-Lugar-Berman act, Pakistan was given an amount of \$7.5 billion civilian aid for five years; an additional amount of \$243 million was announced by U.S. to Pakistan for its socio-economic needs.<sup>34</sup> In addition to financial aid, the US in order to encourage Pakistan taking serious action against terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba and TTP, offered Pakistan the expansion of strategic partnership and embarking to reduce Pakistan and India tensions.<sup>35</sup> While making these offers, Pakistan was warned that ambiguity in its relations with any of the terrorist groups will no longer be ignored by the US. Therefore, Pakistan must stop using insurgents groups for its political goal.<sup>36</sup> President Obama announced in December 2009 the withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan by July 2011, after the security transition from foreign forces to the Afghan National Security Forces.<sup>37</sup>

Eventually, despite modest success at the beginning, the Af-Pak policy did not succeed in completely fulfilling its pre-determined objectives due to the following reasons. And Afghanistan did not experience any tangible development in areas including, fighting insurgents, peace process, good governance, tackling corruption etc:

- Initially, the strategy was not very much welcomed by Pakistan. Pakistan considered the Af-Pak strategy a sort of micromanaging the internal affairs of Pakistan and criticized the US for introducing one single policy for two countries with enormous differences in terms of military, economic and stability aspects.<sup>38</sup>
- Setting a dateline for troops' withdrawal was a premature decision announced by the US. It undermined the entire reconciliation process in Afghanistan. The Taliban efforts to fight the Afghan

government were sustained as they were assured of US troops withdrawal by 2011.<sup>39</sup>

- Pakistan continued to play a double role towards fighting terrorists and introduced the discourse of good and bad terrorists. So Pakistan consistently used it as a launching pad and a place to escape the US retaliation.<sup>40</sup>
- Despite the fact that creating a regional consensus toward stability in Afghanistan was one of the principles of the US Af-Pak strategy, it was a unilateral action and the role of regional countries such as India was totally left out.<sup>41</sup>

### INDIA'S ROLE IN AF-PAK POLICY

At the London conference in January 2010, Pakistan was given the main role in the war against terrorism under the Af-Pak policy. According to Kamalakanta Roul, placation of Pakistan by the U.S. was basically as ignoring India's role in the war against terrorism<sup>42</sup>. There is no doubt that stability in Afghanistan has security repercussions for India but it is Pakistan which is important for the security of India rather than Afghanistan. Similarly, during president Obama's visit to China he declared China as the most credible economic and political partner and announced that peace and stability in Af-Pak region is an area of their mutual interests<sup>43</sup>. Giving floor to two rival countries of India in the Af-Pak policy indicates that India was considered a spoiler and a sensitive factor in Afghanistan's stability for Afghanistan's neighborhood countries. Therefore, to placate Pakistan, a red line was drawn by the US for India's role in the international efforts towards Afghanistan.

### New US South Asia Policy during Trump Presidency

In August 2017, President Trump in his speech, announced a new approach to the issues in Afghanistan, Pakistan and South Asia region. The approach was called "US strategy for South Asia and Afghanistan". Unlike the Af-Pak strategy, the area of new South Asia strategy has been broadened to encompass East Asia and South Asia, but it is focused mainly on Afghanistan, Pakistan and India as one area of operation.

In the US South Asia Strategy, state building in Afghanistan was sidelined. The main focus has been put on fighting and killing terrorists. The policy objectives have been cleared: attacking the US enemies, obliterating ISIS, crushing Al-Qaeda, preventing the Taliban from taking

over Afghanistan and conducting preventive operations to stop mass terror attacks on America. Helping the government and military of Afghanistan together with partners is another aspect of this strategy.<sup>44</sup>

President Trump, shed light on the following four pillars in the US New Strategy: first, there is no time table, when to end or conduct military operations; second, consolidating all instruments of American power – such as diplomatic, economic and military; third, no state building mission but durable support to the government and military sector of Afghanistan; fourth, Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations is no longer tolerable, it can gain from our partnership and will tremendously lose if it maintained harboring criminals and terrorists; and fifth, India’s contribution to peace and stability in Afghanistan is admirable and there is need for India’s enduring cooperation and commitment to help Afghanistan and to achieve shared objectives such as stability in South Asia and Indo-Pacific region<sup>45</sup>.

### **India Factor in US South Asia Strategy with Reference to Afghanistan**

Unlike the pervious US policies toward Afghanistan and the region, within the new US strategy, no red line was drawn for India to play its greater role in economic growth and stability of Afghanistan. In President Bush and Obama’s administrations due to the nature of counter terrorism operations in Afghanistan and the importance of Pakistan’s cooperation to this end, and to accommodate Pakistan’s sensitivities, Washington encouraged India to remain on the sidelines of international efforts in Afghanistan.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, as stated by the former US Ambassador to India Robert D. Blackwill, “India does not figure in an important way in the US calculations regarding Afghanistan”.<sup>47</sup> Thus, US-India relations used to focus more on bilateral rather than regional issue.<sup>48</sup>

However, enlightening the principle of the US South Asia strategy, in his address, President Trump said “We appreciate India’s important contribution to stability in Afghanistan.” He further elaborated that “US and India are committed to pursuing our shared objectives for peace and security in South Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region”.<sup>49</sup> Thus India was encouraged to play a greater role in Afghanistan’s stability and economic development in the frame work of international efforts for Afghanistan.

This indicates a great shift in the US approach towards Afghanistan and the region in the context of India’s contribution. The shift has occurred as a result of the following reasons: First, the stalemate of security situation

in Afghanistan and the region; second, Pakistan's dishonesty in its support for the stability and reconciliation process in Afghanistan as well as its double standard dealing with terrorists; third, India has appeared to be a more constructive and reliable long-term partner for the US in Afghanistan. Bringing stability, promoting economic growth and preventing the Taliban from gaining influence in Afghanistan are the shared critical objectives for both the US and India in Afghanistan;<sup>50</sup> fourth, as president Trump stated in his speech, the US will no longer carry out the "state building" measures in Afghanistan.<sup>51</sup> The aforementioned reasons basically had the flavor of President Trump's frustration with war in Afghanistan and his desire to disengage from the same. So within the South Asia strategy, India was encouraged to undertake the burdens of state building measures and contribute to bringing stability in Afghanistan. In short, as stated by Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk, an active Indian role would increase India's physical and economic security while also helping to preserve and advance the US contribution to Afghan security and reconstruction.<sup>52</sup>

Though it is almost two years since the US South Asia strategy was announced, practical steps are yet to be taken by the US toward Pakistan vis-a-vis stability in Afghanistan and the region. Critics argue that US policies lack consistency and durability. Both during Bush, Obama and current US administrations, American policies toward Afghanistan's stability have experienced continuous changes. For instance US war on Terror, US led counter insurgency operation; first version of US Af-Pak policy, second version of US Af-Pak policy and now Trump's new Strategy called South Asia strategy for Afghanistan show discontinuity and inconsistency in the US policies for Afghanistan and the region are many skeptics on the durability of US tough stance toward Pakistan. According to Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk, in the past, Pakistan in order to retaliate the US for giving a greater role to India in Afghanistan, never showed any reluctance to undermine the reconciliation process in Afghanistan and likewise, obstruct the non-lethal supplies to US forces in Afghanistan.<sup>53</sup> Although, Trump's message to Pakistan was too clear and unequivocal, the same scenario is prevailing at present.

The US South Asia Policy has failed to materialize. Currently, the US spends \$45 billion annually in Afghanistan. This includes \$5 billion on Afghan security forces and \$780 million on economic assistance. Over last 18 years, the cumulative cost to the U.S. has been estimated at \$800 billion on the US deployments and \$105 billion in rebuilding Afghanistan.

However, despite spilling all blood and money, the situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate. In December 2018, the US appointed Zalmay Khalilzad, an Afghan-born former U.S. Ambassador to Kabul and Iraq, as the special envoy for Afghanistan<sup>54</sup>. Trump, expressed frustration at the lack of progress toward US disengagement from Afghanistan's conflict after 18 years. Flurry of recent diplomatic activity by the US indicates that Trump wants to disengage with the Afghan conflict and announce victory in Afghanistan before the US elections in 2020. During December 2018, Khalilzad heading America's peace efforts in Afghanistan, visited the region twice to discuss ways of bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. He toured several countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia and United Arab Emirates, but he skipped Delhi both times. On 20 December 2018, Trump ordered the dropdown of the US forces from 14,000 to 7,000<sup>55</sup>. Later, in January 2019, Trump criticized India for not doing more in Afghanistan as was expected. He equalized India's three billion US dollar aid since 2001 to Afghanistan with the five day expenses of the US in this country.<sup>56</sup>

These developments signal downgrading India's role within the US South Asia policy. In India, it is felt that the US policies are tilted towards Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to bring the Taliban on the negotiation table and pave the way for US to announce its military disengagement with Afghanistan. Announcement of US troops withdrawal from Afghanistan and increasing Pakistan's role in Afghanistan's peace process undermined the US Policy in South Asia. It would escalate tension within Afghanistan particularly in the absence of US forces. It further, created an environment where India being the closest friend of Afghanistan in the region is considering the option of establishing direct communication with the Taliban. India's chief of army, Bipin Rawat while addressing an annual press briefing in New Delhi on 9 January 2019 said, "If a number of countries are talking to the Taliban, then India cannot be out of the bandwagon. If India has interests in Afghanistan, then we should join the bandwagon".<sup>57</sup> Although, Rawat's statement was rejected by Indian Foreign Ministry, the discourse remained prominent in Indian media and intellectual circles. Furthermore, the underground whispers that due to security situation, the US is likely to push for interim government in Afghanistan has further worried India. India does not want the achievements of last 18 years in Afghanistan to be spoiled and let Afghanistan revert back to 1990s. Although, India factor in US South Asia policy lost its sheen this should not be counted as the motive for

India to be reluctant in abandoning its efforts on peace and stability of the region and Afghanistan. An insecure Afghanistan will undermine India's efforts to become a potential rising power in Asia. In contrast a stable, developed and prosperous Afghanistan is a plus point for India to attain economic gains and peacefully compete with China.

### CONCLUSION

It is clear that president Trump is frustrated with the US Afghanistan policy and seeks ways to disengage. The US South Asia policy and India's role within this policy is the replica of past scenarios when Pakistan was shown sensitivity on India's active role in Afghanistan. Pakistan undoubtedly has great influence on Taliban, and since the announcement of the US South Asia policy, the former provided facilities for the regional countries to establish channels of communication with the Taliban. Moscow Peace Summit, Iran's negotiation with the Taliban, the recent US, Saudi Arabia and UAE engagement on talks with the Taliban have undermined the Afghan led and Afghan owned peace process. Instead of compelling the Taliban to enter the peace process, such initiatives gave them legitimacy and upper hand in the peace negotiations with Afghanistan's government. Distrust and clashes of interests among the regional powers and the US are the main source behind manipulating the Afghan peace issue. Peace initiatives by any country in Afghanistan are admirable both for Afghanistan and India. However, it should be Afghan led, Afghan owned and Afghan controlled peace process, which can lead to real peace in this country.

Now as the India factor in US South Asia Policy has lost its importance, the necessity of stability in Afghanistan and the region and India's role in the said context is strongly felt. Afghanistan, India and the US and other regional countries must assure a regional consensus for peace in Afghanistan. An absolute Taliban regime and reversal of 1990s turmoil is neither favorable for the Afghans nor the countries mangled in Afghanistan. Afghanistan presidential election of 2019 and an independent elected government in Afghanistan will assure the stability in the region and will provide the opportunity for the US to pursue its strategic disengagement with Afghanistan. However, the pre-requisite to this end would be long term financial commitment of international community as well as regional countries including India in Afghanistan. During the last 18 years, India has earned goodwill cutting across

Afghanistan's regions and ethnicities. Instead of playing favorites, it has supported institution building and has shown that its interests coincide with the idea of a stable, secure, independent and peaceful Afghanistan. In this critical juncture, "wait and watch" policy for India would not bear positive impact on the security in Afghanistan or in the region. Therefore, supporting the position of Afghanistan government towards building regional consensus on the peace process in this country must be top priority in India's foreign policy. Utilising the available tools of diplomacy, India can negotiate with Russia, Iran and China to manage the possible security vacuum and avoid any sensitive measures that lead to zero sum games in the region.

### Acronym

US	United States
UN	United Nations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
ANDSF	Afghan National Defense and Security Forces

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# THE INDIA-PAKISTAN ENDURING RIVALRY AND AFGHANISTAN'S INTERNAL CONFLICT

MORTEZA NOURMOHAMMADI

## ABSTRACT

*Although the main region in which Afghanistan is located is Central Asia, intense competition between India and Pakistan has placed Kabul in the South Asian regional equations. Afghanistan is India's gateway to Central Asia and the Middle East. India can expand its strategic depth to Central Asia and prevent its siege by China and Pakistan. In other words, by understanding Afghanistan's constraints in its regional role, India tries to strengthen Afghanistan's role in the South Asian equations. For Pakistan, which sees its security relationship with India as existential, Afghanistan has traditionally been seen to offer 'strategic depth' by which Pakistan could withdraw and regroup its forces in case of a confrontation with India. Both India and Pakistan consider Afghanistan as vital for balancing their rivals and, further, pursue their own strategic priorities vis-a-vis Central Asia. Strengthening relations and cooperation between India and Afghanistan will extend the influence of New Delhi in Kabul and strengthen India's effective role-playing field in Central Asia and the Middle East. India aspires to be the regional power, and its economic success and relative political stability have strengthened it considerably in recent years.*

**Keywords:** India, Afghanistan, South Asia, Pakistan, Rivalry

## INTRODUCTION

Due to its geo-strategic and geopolitical location, Afghanistan is located between several regional sub-systems. Afghanistan is located at the intersection of several regions and can connect the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia and Central Asia through its land mass. Afghanistan was once the area of strategic competition in the nineteenth century, the main players being the British and Russian empires. After the collapse of the

former Soviet Union, has the 'great game' persisted in another way, which is referred to as the 'new great game'. The perceptions and security concerns of Afghanistan with South Asian countries are so tightly intertwined that the national security of regional states cannot be considered independent of Afghanistan security. Instability and insecurity in Afghanistan and the escalation of crisis in this geographical area have had devastating effects on neighbors and countries of the region, especially in South Asia.

Since the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, the region of South Asia has been beset with continued hostility, tension, and conflict between India and Pakistan. The India-Pakistan enduring rivalry persists to this day, and represents a major threat to regional stability. Several authors have attempted to understand this dangerous dyad through an application of enduring rivalry. Khan<sup>2</sup> addresses the role of nuclear weapons; Tremblay and Schofield<sup>3</sup> examine the impact of domestic factors, such as regime type, on the intensity and persistence of the rivalry; and Paul<sup>4</sup> analyzes relative power capabilities, designating the Indo-Pak dyad a case of truncated asymmetry. More general treatments are offered by Diehl, Goertz and Saeedi<sup>5</sup> and Leng<sup>6</sup>. The former employs the punctuated equilibrium model of enduring rivalry, and explores how the particulars of the India-Pakistan rivalry are accounted for by this framework.

Among the countries in the region, Afghanistan has a very important geopolitical and geostrategic position in Indian and Pakistan foreign policy. For this reason, Afghanistan's political and economic stability is affected by India-Pakistan rivalry. The present study seeks to assess the impact of India-Pakistan rivalry on Afghanistan's internal conflict. In other words, the research question is how the India-Pakistan rivalry affects political stability and conflict resolution in Afghanistan. The results of the study indicate that India-Pakistan rivalry and the strategic position of Afghanistan have aggravated the internal conflict in Afghanistan. Both India and Pakistan perceive influence in Afghanistan as critical to achieving their primary national security objectives (though for different reasons), and both approach Afghanistan as a zero-sum dynamic in which one side's gain is a loss for the other.

### **AFGHANISTAN'S POSITION IN THE SOUTH ASIAN SECURITY COMPLEX**

Afghanistan is at the intersection of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. South Asia is one of the most fragile and critical parts of the

world in the 21st century. South Asia includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. This area is a continuum of instability, big and small wars, and disorderly situations. Territorial and border disputes such as Kashmir, the Durand border line, the existence of various ethnic and religious groups, separatists, terrorist groups and the spread of nuclear technology have strengthened insecurity in this region.<sup>7</sup>

Due to its geo-strategic geopolitics, Afghanistan can be linked to several regional sub-systems, through which the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia and Central Asia are linked. The connection of separate sub-systems with each other is one of the main functions of the countries referred to by Buzan as the insulated country.<sup>8</sup>

Given many crises and the weakness of government in Afghanistan, Buzan's view of this country was correct before September 11, 2001. In other words, Afghanistan has caused them to be separated more than the proximity of neighboring sub-systems.<sup>9</sup> But after September 11, 2001, Afghanistan is no longer an insular state as Afghanistan has undergone many changes since then. The entry of Afghanistan into the security dynamics of the South Asian region after 9/11 is the main reason for Afghanistan's withdrawal from an insular state.<sup>10</sup>

In the aftermath of 9/11, there is a necessity to adjust the status of insulators, especially the status of Afghanistan for two major reasons. First, Afghanistan joined SAARC in 2007 and it is an official member of South Asia's only regional association.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, the security challenges of Afghanistan at present are much more connected with Pakistan directly and with India indirectly than ever before.<sup>12</sup> One of the most important insecurity factors in South Asia is the Kashmir issues. The conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir has led to the formation of diverse security patterns in South Asia.

The security relations of this area are largely centered on India or Pakistan, because the issues of South Asia, in particular military, economic, political and security issues, are fundamentally influenced by India-Pakistan relations. As a result, the tensions and political rivalries of these two countries have influenced the issues of the countries of the region, especially Afghanistan. On the other hand, Afghanistan's internal affairs, such as terrorism, fundamentalism, drugs and insecurity, have had a negative impact on India's national security and the Kashmir issue.<sup>13</sup> So far, no regional security cooperation organization has been established in South Asia. South Asian security arrangements are being pursued in the

unofficial framework and informal structures. Therefore, it is easier for Afghanistan to enter the security relations of the region rather than being part of the official structures of other regions.

Afghanistan is important to the South Asian complex in several ways. Most importantly, Pakistan - undoubtedly the weaker party in the equation - looks to Afghanistan for strategic depth. In the case of an escalation of tensions with India, possibly a military attack, Pakistan would rely on Afghanistan for regrouping its forces.<sup>14</sup> As Frederic Grare points out, discussing the often counterintuitive alliances between Pakistan and various radical Afghan movements, the Indo-Pak dispute is still the main determinant of Pakistan's Afghan policy.<sup>15</sup>

#### **AFGHANISTAN AND THE CHANGING PATTERNS OF AMITY AND ENMITY IN THE REGION**

The conflict in Afghanistan and its security developments have changed the amity and enmity of the South Asian region. This pattern has affected the interests and perceptions of countries as well as the distribution of power among the existing political units in the area, but the force of coercion, which is the same issue in Afghanistan, has also been affected. In other words, specific issues cause conflict or cooperation, and create a complex set of fears, threats, and friendships. Experimentally, the occurrence of a Marxist coup in Afghanistan followed by a massive disagreement with the People's Democratic regime led to the political alignment of regional friends and enemies.<sup>16</sup> In this framework, India and its regional allies recognized the People's Democratic Party and expanded relations with it. India pursued this policy with the aim of confronting the Pakistani-backed Islamist ideological front.

On the other hand, Pakistan and its regional allies opposed India. This confrontation followed the visit of Pakistan's ambassador to the Democratic People's Party (PDP) General Secretary. During this meeting, the Pakistani ambassador called for a new Afghan government in the context of the Durand Line, and the Secretary-General emphasized Durand Line's non-negotiation. President Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan called the regime of Afghanistan a direct threat to Pakistan because of its dependence on the Soviet Union. As Hafizullah Amin assumed power, the situation worsened and tensions were strengthened in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, where border conflicts expanded and the state of domestic and foreign violence led to the fall of 100-day government of Amin.

During the *Mujahideen* regime, Pakistan continued to equip and support the opposition forces of the newly established *Mujahideen* government to prevent the formation of a strong government in Afghanistan. In fact, Pakistan pursued a weak and unstable Afghanistan strategy. From the perspective of India, a stable Afghanistan could provide favorable conditions for pursuing its security and economic interests in the region.

The collapse of the Taliban and the formation of an interim government under the Bonn Agreement led to the transformation of regional security equations. Such a situation led to a fundamental change in the behavioral patterns of the countries of the region, the rules of the game, the role of actors and regional polarization based on the pattern of friendship and hostility. In the new security environment, Pakistan became the center of regional terrorism and the regional enemy of Afghanistan. But India was viewed as a supporter of democracy and friend of Afghanistan, and India took steps towards reconstruction and state-building in Afghanistan.

Now, the South Asian regional security complex, which was already dominated by the India- Pakistan rivalry added nuclear threat to its character. This particular scenario of Indo-Pakistan dominance in the regional order is viewed with deep dissatisfaction by the other states of the region. The only regional organization South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has become a brain dead organization because of the negative atmosphere and lack of trust and willingness to adopt significant regional development plans due to the India –Pakistan rivalry.

In the South Asian anarchy structure, in addition to power relations, amity and enmity patterns also play a role in defining the fundamental structure and nature of the security complex in this region. This suggests that these patterns have been institutionalized through the influence, benefits, and structure of the basic regional security complex. The South Asian security complex states that the balance of power alone is not enough to estimate the patterns of conflict in the region, but historic friendship and affinity in the name of Islam and Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, and political Islam, such as Salafi and Shi'a, cause conflict or cooperation. In other words, the anarchic state of politics in South Asia is shaped by conflicting identities and contradictions, rather than being influenced by the realist definition of international anarchy. As a result, varied variables such as religion, history, culture, and geography, or patterns of amity and

enmity are affected. The most important religious differences in the region arise from the divorce of Sunni and Shia, and the contradiction between secularism and religion, especially Islamic fundamentalism.

In the history of political relations in the South Asian countries, identity contradictions have not only existed but are increasing significantly. From Manuel Castells's point of view, in most of the world we see a return to identities rooted in history and ethnicity. These identities are constructed using ideas from history, because most people want an identity with deep roots, not a newly created one.<sup>17</sup> The plurality of cultures and identities have created fears and security threats in South Asia, since transnational powers have used differences and diversity of cultures as instruments of pressure on rival countries. These identities affect international politics in two ways. First, countries use these identities on other frontiers as instruments of pressure on competing governments. Second, these identities are interpreted by leaders as a threat to their regime's security.<sup>18</sup>

The use of identity politics during the civil war in Afghanistan was clearly evident. During this war, Pakistan used the Pashtun identity to strengthen the Pashtun groups. But India supported the north. Sectarian violence in Pakistan was primarily a cultural and controversial issue between the two ideologies of Salafism and Islam of the Islamic Republic of Iran, both seeking regional domination. Ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity in the region, the existence of historical differences and the negative attitudes of some ethnic groups in South Asia, affect the patterns of amity and enmity in the South Asian region. Different ethnic groups of the region, based on their historical memory, regard some ethnicities as friends and unions, and others as enemies and unreliable. And this is the basis of the main conflict and political relations governing the region.

### INDIA-PAKISTAN RIVALRY IN AFGHANISTAN

Historically, Pakistan's key role in Afghanistan's domestic developments is undeniable because of the influence of rival powers and ethnic and territorial tensions. The implementation of its strategic depth plan and the Pashtun issue illustrates the vital interests of Pakistan with the aim of strengthening the influence and advance of the proxy war in Afghanistan. Pakistan's security agencies are pursuing and implementing a strategic depth policy, seeking to expand Islamabad's influence in Afghanistan, to face the threats of India.<sup>19</sup>

Pakistan's support for the Taliban-led Pashtun government was

designed to counteract the influence of India and suppress separatist movements in the northern regions along the Afghan border. The purpose of the strategic depth in its Afghanistan policy is to create a strong leverage against India in the event of any military involvement on Kashmir. After the collapse of the Taliban and the formation of a new government, India's expanding activities in the economic and security dimensions, boosted its status as the most important regional ally of Afghanistan. The main purpose of India's security-economic activities in Afghanistan is to confront Pakistan's influence as a traditional rival and its territorial siege.<sup>20</sup> India's goal of investing in Afghanistan's economic plans and the reopening of a consulate in Pashtun southern areas is to strengthen control over security issues and implement a strategy of blockade of Pakistan from the north.

Following such a policy, after the strategic partnership agreement between Kabul and New Delhi was signed in 2011, India's commitment to training, providing military equipment and financial assistance to Afghan security forces and military forces was strengthened.<sup>21</sup> India is the largest non-OECD donor to Afghanistan. It provides over 1,000 scholarships to Afghan students and fosters commercial ties with the country. India has also offered training to the Afghan National Security Forces, but this has not been realized due to Pakistani opposition. Nevertheless, India has sent about four thousand Indian workers to Afghanistan. It has built infrastructure projects such as Salma dam, educational and health institutions and the reconstruction of overland roads. In terms of soft power, India's asset is the popularity of Indian music, movies and television shows in Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup>

It is reasonable to assume that the last thing that Pakistan would like to see is an Indian presence on both its eastern and western borders. Pakistan will not allow any other regional neighbor of Afghanistan, in particular India, to gain a preponderance of influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan's interest is vital at a time when India's growing political, military, and economic ties with both Afghanistan and the United States lead many Pakistanis to believe that their country is being marginalized. Afghanistan is strategically important for India and its rival, Pakistan. Afghanistan, however, seems to be important for Pakistan because it can increase its strategic depth vis-a-vis Kashmir and India. For Afghanistan, relations with Pakistan and India are both essential, but India is far more important because India sees Afghanistan's security as its own security.<sup>23</sup> But Pakistan is pursuing the policy of escalation of insecurity in Afghanistan through the spread of religious fundamentalism.

In the aftermath of the 2001 intervention, the India-Pakistan rivalry related to Afghanistan has taken on an entirely new form. Indian visibility in Afghanistan went from low to high, as the country built up an extensive diplomatic presence, with a large embassy in the capital, and four consulates, including in the cities of Jalalabad and Kandahar, both of which are within close reach of the Pakistani border. India also acted quickly in becoming a significant contributor with over 3 billion US dollars aid programs, with a multifaceted and highly visible effort that can be compared in scope only to the larger Western donors. Pakistan, on the other hand, had unwillingly accepted the demolition of the Taliban regime. Given the overarching security orientation, it made things considerably worse to observe the instalment of a new government cultivating its ties to India, while it was seeking to keep Pakistan at an arm's length.<sup>24</sup>

#### COMMON INTERESTS OF IRAN AND INDIA IN AFGHANISTAN

One of the most important areas for cooperation and convergence between the two countries is the security issues and the activities of religious groups in Afghanistan. Iran, like India, is worried about the influence of ISIL and Taliban and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan. The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan over the past two decades has brought India and Iran together in their assessments of new threats to regional security.<sup>25</sup> If Iran is concerned about the Taliban's role in drug trafficking and violent behavior towards the Shiite minority, India also is worried about the unity between Pakistan and Afghanistan and their role in the Kashmir *jihād*. India and Iran are working together in Afghanistan to secure their interests. The two countries are worried about the extremists' dominance over Afghanistan's political arena. India views the Taliban as a model of Islamic extremism that, in addition to its activities in Kashmir, is launching terrorist attacks in New Delhi. India and Iran backed the Northern Alliance minority against the Taliban during the years 1996-2001.<sup>26</sup> Both countries also supported the overthrow of the Taliban regime, and both seek to prevent the Taliban from regaining control over Afghanistan. Common interests and threats from terrorist groups and trans-regional powers require cooperation between the two countries in Afghanistan. In other words, strengthening Iran-India cooperation and influence in Afghanistan will weaken the presence of countries such as China, the United States and Pakistan in Afghanistan. What is important for Iran is to take advantage of India's growing power in the region. On the other hand, the

interests of Iran in Afghanistan are in contrast to the interests of the main actors in the field, such as the United States and Pakistan, especially since Iran is calling for the full withdrawal of the United States and NATO forces from Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup>

Iran and India are striving to expand their strategic partnership, especially in the security and economic spheres, with the knowledge of the capacities and the material and immaterial power to achieve their common interests in Afghanistan. Since Iran has no allies in Afghanistan, it needs to move its position closer to India. Iran's support to India for playing a more effective role in Afghanistan, will help in moderating the influence of the United States and Pakistan. It can be said that one of the reasons for the growth of terrorism in the region is the lack of joint planning of Iran and India as two important regional countries. The two countries that have been affected by terrorism more than other countries can create an alliance against terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan, thereby reducing the presence of foreign troops.<sup>28</sup> Iran and India share common concerns and interests in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, which can achieve their goals by working together. Security of Afghanistan and Pakistan will enhance the security of Iran and India.

The existence of strategic Kabul-New Delhi agreements, Kabul's ties with Iran, and Afghanistan's positive view of Iran can strengthen the economic, security and political approaches of both Iran and India in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, political and economic cooperation between Iran and India on regional issues, especially on Afghanistan and Pakistan, which calls for strategic cooperation between the two governments, has not been shaped by various internal, regional and international reasons. The most important of these are the new Indian international alliances (especially with the United States and Israel), the uncertainties of the country in the region, the type of foreign policy strategy of India and the ruling parties in India.

### CONCLUSION

It is recognised that Afghanistan's dilemmas are interlocked with its adjoining and distant neighbours in South-West Asia. The results of the study indicate that the Afghan political security developments have brought the region into the new security environment. In the new atmosphere, a wide range of orientations have been formed around specific issues in Afghanistan. These orientations range from partnership to

competition, from conflict to order, from friendship to hostility. The security and conflict developments in Afghanistan have brought about a change in the social fabric of the region and have pushed the security arena into discourse conflicts. Conflict discourses both in terms of Hinduism and Islamic extremism, and in terms of democracy and fundamentalism, are rooted in conflicting values and opposing identities. But under the influence of Afghanistan situation, this conflict has been reproduced, deepened, and specially developed. The conflict has had a significant impact on the political arrangement of units in the security complex as well as in the formation of the conflict.

A range of factors such as US policy in Afghanistan, terrorism and fundamentalism, the search for a regional solution to domestic crises, India-Pakistan rivalry and joining the SAARC Organization have led Afghanistan to enter the South Asian regional security complex. The impact of the Afghan security environment on the South Asian security complex can also be seen in the context of the competition and balance of power. Afghanistan has moved away from Pakistan in the new security environment and is closer to India. This proximity led the two countries to sign a strategic pact. Afghanistan's approach to India has increased the balance of power in favor of India in regional affairs. However Pakistan sees Afghanistan as its strategic depth in the region.

Regionally, Afghanistan is in a particularly difficult position because Pakistan provides the Taliban safe haven as it did for al-Qaeda. If Afghanistan were rid of the threat from the Taliban, then perhaps the story would be different. Pakistan seeks to discredit Indian support to Afghanistan arguing that India is using its embassy and consulates to recruit anti-Pakistan insurgents. Pakistan's regional insecurity impacts Afghanistan's domestic security by disrupting processes that could help build Afghan stability. The regional fate of Afghanistan is yet to be determined as it is directly tied to Pakistan whose political insecurity is a major impediment to Afghanistan's domestic security.

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## THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION AND AFGHANISTAN

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Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) has emerged as a prominent regional organisation bringing together Russia, China, Central Asian Republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, India and Pakistan as full members, besides Iran, Afghanistan, Mongolia and Belarus as Observers and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Turkey as Dialogue Partners. SCO is the largest regional organisation in terms of its geographical coverage and population. The looming threats from radicalisation, terrorism and separatism pose serious challenges to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the SCO member countries. The rise of the ISIS and its sustained efforts to strike roots in the region compounds these security challenges. All through its summit meetings the SCO has been stressing the need to fight the threats of religious extremism, separatism and terrorism. SCO is seen as an important organisation to promote and consolidate the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Central Asian Republics and also to insulate these countries from any extra-regional interference and pressure in the region.

In its initial year of establishment, the SCO members met in Shanghai in June 2001 and signed *Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism* on 15 June 2001. This was followed up by the conclusion of the *Agreement on Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure*, in 2002. RATS was established as a centre to collect, collate and exchange information about terrorist movements, draft counter-terrorism policies and laws and also to maintain relations with the concerned institutions of the member states dealing with extremism, terrorism and separatism. RATS can be turned into an effective institutional mechanism to deepen cooperation between the SCO member countries in dealing with the three

evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism, besides drug trafficking, organised crime, cyber crime etc.

When in 1990s Al Qaeda, the trans-regional terrorist network headed by Osama bin Laden, turned Afghanistan as the base for international terrorism, it became a major threat to the neighbourhood security, particularly to the newly independent Central Asian countries. In the aftermath of 9/11, when international war against terror was launched in Afghanistan, the Central Asian Republics of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan provided air bases to the ISAF forces at Karshi Khanabad, Manas and Dushanbe respectively. Kazakhstan gave overflying rights, repair and refueling facilities. Besides, the Central Asian Republics became involved in the humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan. Soon after the Interim Administration headed by Hamid Karzai was set up in Afghanistan, SCO in its June 2002 meeting held at St. Petersburg formally welcomed “the creation of a new, stable Afghanistan, free of terror, war, drugs and poverty”, and expressed readiness to “facilitate the process of forming broadly representative government in the interest of the entire Afghan people”.<sup>1</sup> The next SCO summit of 2003 held in Moscow was concerned about the threat of drug trafficking from Afghanistan. The member states agreed that “an international strategy for comprehensive neutralization of the Afghan drugs threat be drawn under the UN aegis”.<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai attended the Tashkent summit of SCO held in Tashkent in 2004. At this summit, the member states issued a declaration on 17 June 2004 recognizing the central coordinating role of the UN in the implementation of international programs in Afghanistan. They stressed the need to coordinate efforts in the fight against terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking with a view to achieve security, peace and order, and create the necessary conditions for peaceful reconstruction in Afghanistan. At the Astana summit held in 2005, the SCO members reaffirmed their commitment to fight against drug trafficking emanating from Afghanistan. A protocol to establish the SCO-Afghanistan contact group was adopted by the SCO in Astana in 2005.

Recognizing the near-and long-term importance of stability in Afghanistan to the SCO region, the organization created a SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group (SACG). Formal cooperation between Afghanistan and the SCO began in 2005 with the establishment of SACG aimed at fighting terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking. In its Bishkek declaration of 16 August 2007, issued after the SCO summit, the member states expressed “concern over the drug threat emanating from

Afghanistan and its negative impact on the Central Asian region". They called for "conscious strengthening of 'anti-drug security belt' around Afghanistan". Afghanistan was discussed once again at the Dushanbe summit of SCO in August 2008. President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan also attended this summit. The member states took note of the "current developments in Afghanistan, increasing volumes of drug trafficking, transnational organised crime, which necessitated the creation of joint mechanisms of assessment, prevention and response to such challenges and threats". In their declaration issued on 27 August 2008, the heads of SCO member states called upon the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operating in Afghanistan on the mandate of the UN Security Council to pay greater attention to the task of combating the production and trafficking of the Afghan narcotics in coordination with the government of Afghanistan."

The SCO organised a special conference on Afghanistan in March 2009 in Moscow. Besides the SCO member states and observers, the participants included the UN Secretary General, US Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs and representatives from the EU, NATO, OSCE, CSTO, OIC etc. Such a high level of international participation in effect validated the SCO's role in Afghanistan. Recognising the challenges in Afghanistan and the region, the conference underscored the importance of sustained international efforts to achieve a stable, peaceful, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan. It emphasised the need for sustained international support to strengthen Afghan security institutions to effectively combat the scourge of terrorism and production and trafficking of drugs.<sup>3</sup> Another joint statement issued by the SCO member states and Afghanistan during this conference, called for "further improvement of the SCO drug control cooperation mechanism as well as the elaboration of plans of practical cooperation between anti-drug agencies of the SCO Member States and other countries in the region". It also called for the "adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism as well as the elaboration of regional counter-terrorism legal instruments."<sup>4</sup>

At its Yekaterinburg summit held on 15-16 June 2009, the SCO member states reiterated their "grave concern over the complicated situation in Afghanistan related to illicit drug trafficking, terrorism and transnational organised crime". The next SCO summit held in Tashkent on 10-11 June 2010 also took note of the continuing deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan and terrorism, drug trafficking and transnational

organized crimes originating from that country, which posed serious threats to the region. The SCO member states reaffirmed their support for the UN's leading role in coordinating international efforts in mediating the situation in Afghanistan. Maintaining that military means alone cannot resolve the issue of Afghanistan, the SCO member states supported "pushing forward the negotiation process in which the United Nations plays a leading role and the Afghan people participate." The SCO emphasised that "the time-honored history, national origin and traditional religious values of all ethnic groups in Afghanistan should be fully respected." At the SCO summit at Astana held on 10-11 June 2011, besides the five heads of SCO member states, delegations from the Observer countries of India, Pakistan, Iran and Mongolia also participated. The President of Afghanistan also attended as a guest. In its declaration issued after the conclusion of the summit, the SCO "supported the development of Afghanistan as an independent, neutral, peaceful and prosperous country".

At the Beijing summit of SCO held on 6-7 January 2012, Afghanistan which is a neighbour to most of the SCO states, was admitted as an Observer of the SCO. The common view of members of the SCO regarding Afghanistan is that there cannot be a military solution to the Afghan problem and that the SCO states must help Afghanistan develop economically, politically and with the participation of Afghan people. The SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group was revived when it met at the level of deputy foreign ministers in Moscow on 11 October 2017. The delegates stressed the importance of supporting the Afghanistan government and peoples' efforts to settle the conflict through political consultations and dialogue. The members exchanged views on the security challenges and threats in the region and assistance to rebuild Afghanistan as a peaceful, stable and prosperous state. The SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group held another meeting on 28 May 2018, at the level of deputy foreign ministers of the SCO member states and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, in Beijing. To quote Rashid Alimov, the Secretary General of the SCO, "the meeting saw an in-depth exchange of views on the situation in Afghanistan, assistance to efforts undertaken by the government and people of Afghanistan to restore the peace process, and measures for further SCO-Afghanistan cooperation." "The leaders of the SCO member states were unanimous in their firm commitment to Afghanistan's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity, as well as their invariable support for the Afghan Government and people as

they strive to restore their country and strengthen democratic institutions.” “It felt that a comprehensive approach to security, economy, state governance and development problems with the coordinating role of the United Nations in guaranteeing peace and stability in Afghanistan can bring the long awaited result.”

Chinese President Xi Jinping in his address at the 18th SCO Summit in Qingdao stressed the “ need to actively implement the 2019-2021 program of cooperation for combating ‘three evil forces of terrorism, separatism, and extremism;’ continue to conduct the ‘Peace Mission’ and other joint counter-terrorism exercises....We need to give full play to the role of SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group to facilitate peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan.” So the SCO Afghanistan Contact Group needs to be fully operationalised to enable it adopt effective counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics measures.

As Ambassador Vitaliy Vorobiev of Russian Federation has stated<sup>5</sup>: “One should not forget that the SCO was created as a response to immediate threats of terrorism and drug trafficking from the Afghanistan conflict in the late 1990s. The SCO idea was born from a collective demand for a regional coalition to combat them”. Similar views were expressed by Muratbek Imanaliev, former Secretary General of the SCO during an interview in 2010 in Bishkek<sup>6</sup>: “Afghanistan is the main reason of the cooperation of the member states of the SCO and the problem for all the countries, the only subject of common interest”. According to the Russian Security Council Secretary, Nikolai Patrushev<sup>7</sup>, “first of all, Afghanistan remains the main base of terrorists, including those related to terrorist and extremist organizations whose goal is to destabilize the situation in Central Asia, topple the existing political regimes and create the Muslim Caliphate within its borders. Second, Afghanistan remains the main base for production of raw opium and also the main supplier of heroin and other drugs to global markets via Central Asian states. After the withdrawal of coalition forces, the radicals began to feel confident in a number of provinces in Afghanistan, and in the north of Afghanistan established a bridgehead from which extremists penetrate into the neighboring countries of Central Asia. The drug trafficking threat has increased”.

An Afghan diplomat and an academic, M.Ashraf Haidari has put it succinctly<sup>8</sup>: “Over the past 17 years, we have learned from international security cooperation in Afghanistan that without sincere, results-driven regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism with no distinction it

would be hard to secure the peace in Afghanistan. Indeed, a collective failure to defeat terrorism and to win the peace on Afghanistan would entail adverse spill over effects, which could easily transcend borders, destabilising the region and the world at large. But this shouldn't be allowed to happen".

Even though war against terror in Afghanistan was launched over eighteen years ago, the situation in Afghanistan remains unstable due to increasing insecurity, and rise in deadly attacks by the extremist and militant groups. Reports of kidnappings, ambushes, killings, rocket attacks and bomb explosions in Afghanistan have been coming almost daily. The year 2018 witnessed an 11 per cent increase in civilian deaths as compared to that in 2017. While the negotiations between the US and Taliban are continuing, the conflict has actually escalated with recurrent deadly attacks killing hundreds of civilians and security personnel. According to latest report (February 2019) of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 10,993 civilian casualties (3,804 people including 927 children killed and 7,189 injured) were documented in the year 2018, caused by suicide attacks, IED blasts etc. Another report of UNAMA titled *Increasing Harm to Afghan civilians from the Deliberate and Indiscriminate use of Improved Explosive Devices* documents a sharp increase in 2018 in the killings and maiming of Afghan civilians by suicide bombers and IEDs. It reports that "bombs were designed and placed to detonate among crowds of civilians to kill and maim Afghan men, women and children, destroy livelihoods, disrupt lives and create terror among the survivors". The report identifies the victims as students, players and spectators at cricket and wrestling matches, worshippers at mosques, humanitarian aid workers, journalists, medical personnel, education and civil government staff, civilians, election workers, men and women.

Another aspect of the deteriorating situation is that the total opium poppy cultivation area in Afghanistan has been estimated by the latest UN Office on Drugs (UNODC) *Afghanistan Opium Survey of 2018*, at 263,000 hectares, which is 17 per cent higher than the level of 2014 representing an increase of 39,000 hectares. Most of the poppy cultivation took place in the southern region (69%) followed by the Western region (12%), Eastern region (8%) and northern region (7%).

So ensuring sustainable security and peace in Afghanistan is a great challenge facing the international community. International community needs to shed its ambivalence and evolve a concerted strategy to curb terrorism and extremism in and around Afghanistan by stopping their

sources of funds, arms, logistics and training and ideological motivation. Indian policy has been to help in rebuilding the physical infrastructure in Afghanistan, training and scholarships for human resource and skill development. India sponsors over 1,000 Afghan students annually for their education/training in Indian institutions. India provided few hundred vehicles, some aeroplanes and helicopters, built the new parliament complex, Salma Dam which has a capacity of 42 MW of power besides irrigating 75,000 hectares of farmland, Delaram-Zaranj road, transmission line from Termez to Kabul and over 200 public and private schools. Hundreds of small and medium development projects have also been started. India is the biggest regional donor and fifth largest donor globally having provided an assistance of over 3 billion US dollars since 2001. The reconstruction of collapsed social and economic infrastructure and development of Afghanistan as the transit hub of regional trade and traffic, will help in putting the social and economic situation in Afghanistan back on tracks, though the process is cumbersome and long drawn.

The future of Afghanistan with guarantees of peace, security and well being of its people hinges upon the success of reconciliation between rival ethnic/regional Afghan political groups and commanders, emergence of a balanced and broad-based stable government representing diverse ethnic, regional and minority interests, the setting up and effective functioning of law enforcement agencies, strengthening the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces by having a robust vetting process in place to prevent members of armed groups involved in crimes from being recruited by security or government institutions, on the speedy implementation of reconstruction of social, economic and education infrastructure, and on elimination of drugs and arms trafficking from Afghanistan. India supports the people and the government of Afghanistan, in their efforts to build a united, sovereign, democratic, peaceful, stable, prosperous and inclusive nation. India supports all efforts for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan which are inclusive and Afghan-led, Afghan- owned and Afghan controlled. Intra-Afghan peace and consensus among various Afghan groups/stake holders is the sine qua non for lasting peace and stability. The SCO member countries including Iran remain concerned over the cross-border movement of extremists, armed militants, refugees, drugs, arms and organised crime from Afghanistan into their countries. Several countries including Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan which have physical borders with Afghanistan, are worried about the spill over of the conflict,

terrorism and extremism from Afghanistan to their own territories. Since, many countries are part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), it can be a good and viable forum for these countries to express their concerns on Afghanistan and work out a common strategy to deal with the challenge. It would, therefore, be necessary to let the Kabul Process for Peace and Security in Afghanistan work out the negotiations and dialogue between various stake holders within Afghanistan without any external pressure or inducement. While the peace process should be aimed at engaging and bringing together all the Afghan groups, it should isolate the extremist and terrorist networks which are bent upon recreating the Caliphate/Emirate in Afghanistan, which would be catastrophic for the SCO region, given the past experience of instability and conflict in various Central Asian countries. As such SCO and RATS have a distinctive role to play by working out definite agreements/arrangements between the member states including Afghanistan to (i) negotiate bilateral extradition agreements, (ii) take regular stock of the radical extremists and terrorists operating in the region, and exchange such information (iii) identify the sources of terror-financing and take necessary steps to block these channels, (iv) to engage and seek cooperation of the Islamic clergy/Ulema for rejecting the hate ideology of the terrorists and extremists in the name of *jihad*.

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8. See M.Ashraf Haidari, How China and India can help decure peace in Afghanistan. *Raisina Debates*, ORF 18 August 2018.

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# DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN *INSTITUTIONAL FLAWS AND SECURITY CHALLENGES*

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## ABSTRACT

*Election is considered as the main pillar of democratic regime, though not the only one. Transparency as well as impartiality of electoral institutions for holding an inclusive election is important for evolution of democracy. Impartiality of electoral institutions, transparency, and inclusiveness are the main ingredients which brings changes to democratic test of any political society. However, politicization of electoral institutions and to hold election for gaining political legitimacy may lead towards democratic disaster, political instability and ultimately may lead to totalitarianism. As in case of Afghanistan, there have never been independent electoral institutions. The electoral institutions have been under immense influence of executive – political elites in power, as well as local forces including warlords, chief of tribes, ethnic and religious leaders and more or less the international donors. The permanence of electoral officials depends on their loyalty to political elites at the center of power. The performance of electoral authorities is driven by their ethnic and political affiliation than the rules and regulations under the constitution of Afghanistan and election law. This article evaluates the process of presidential and parliamentary elections in Afghanistan during post-Taliban era and explains the historical, social and political reasons for the dysfunctionality of the electoral institutions to act as independent, impartial and transparent establishment in Afghanistan.*

## INTRODUCTION

Authoritarian legacy of the past is considered as the main hindrance in democratic functioning in the present. Afghanistan has never experienced a true democratic regime in which the people could get the chance to exercise their political rights and select their leaders, or have control over the government decision making and performances. Constitutions of 1923

and 1964 provided for a constitutional monarchy; constitution of 1987 and 1990 opted for a republic; while all these constitutions came into existence as a result of bold initiatives by the rulers for consolidation of their dwindling power than genuine ambitions for democratic change and political openness. With the loss of political power by different regimes, their constitutions also got buried.<sup>1</sup>

Shah Mahmud's reforms in the political, social and economic spheres were initiated with expectation that people would forget the past political repressions and tackle political upheaval before it gets late. King Zahir Shah and Prime Minister Shah Mahmud's speeches and promises for democratic reforms were more a political maneuver to prevent public upheaval than genuine belief in political liberty and democratic values.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the constitutional reform of 1964 was political maneuver by King Zahir Shah to limit the accumulation of power by his family descendent and overcome his political rival including his power thirsty cousin Mohammad Daoud. King's supreme power was preserved by the Constitution of 1964.<sup>3</sup> The King stood above all institutions of government, acted as supreme commander of the armed forces, and had the right to declare war, conclude peace, and enter treaties at his discretion. He was also entitled to summon the *Loya Jirga*, dissolve Parliament and appoint the prime minister, the chief justice and judges of the Supreme Court and half the members of the upper chamber of Parliament.<sup>4</sup> The constitution of 1964 recognized the equality of ethnic communities,<sup>5</sup> yet ethnicity, regionalism, and tribalism played an important role in the selection of personnel for government posts. Appointments as cabinet members, judges, governors, chiefs of provincial police, heads of provincial education, and so on remained the domain of the middle and upper classes, mostly Pashtuns.<sup>6</sup> The ruling class did not allow members of the middle and lower classes to participate in the country's politics and play a role in the day-to-day decision making process. This class also monopolized key economic and industrial enterprises as well as import-export activities. The ruling class maneuvered to remain in power either through the use of coercive force or false promises and illusion of democratic reforms in the country.

Daoud who acquired power through a military coup on July 17, 1973, also promised the draft of a new constitution based on democratic values. But it did not happen for four years.<sup>7</sup> He organized a Grand Assembly at the end of January 1977 to endorse the constitution. Daoud appointed 130 of out of 219 delegates at the Grand Assembly. According to the constitution, President of the Republic was recognized as the head of the

State, the President assumed the highest authority of the state with extensive authority and made the executive branch to perform its duties under the leadership of the President of the Republic. Freedom of thought and expression were reflected as inviolable right of every citizens of Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> However, in practice, the freedom of association was curbed, as Daoud banned private news papers and political parties, and established his own political party, *Hizb-e Enqilab-e Milli* in July 1977, which became the only political party allowed to engage in politics. Daoud's cabinet was formed based on nepotism.<sup>9</sup> Individuals associated with ruling family – the Mohammadzai, continued to hold senior positions in the government and similar posts in the executive and the judiciary were reserved for certain members of the Mohammadzai clan.

Downfall of Daoud's regime led to seizure of power by Taraki, who justified the April coup 1978, as a bona fide socialist revolution. He claimed that it created a new model for people in the developing world to follow.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Amin further glorified the coup when he called the October Socialist Revolution of 1917 in Russia a classic example of the revolutionary movement and the April coup as an example of a modern-day revolution.<sup>11</sup> The ruling party described the coup as an irreversible revolution and declared the state a democratic entity that represented the interests of the oppressed strata – workers, peasants, and the national bourgeoisie. The regime articulated the equality of rights and obligations for all citizens of Afghanistan, irrespective of their racial, tribal, linguistic, sex, domicile, religion, education, parentage, assets and social status.<sup>12</sup> In order to establish its hold on power, the PDPA dismissed most high-ranking government officials and appointed *Khalq* and *Parcham* members to key leadership posts – individuals who lacked the knowledge, qualification, and experience for the posts. Consolidation of the party's dictatorship required the elimination of opponents. To this end the regime used mass arrests, torture and execution of people they believed to be a threat to their rule. The regime's intelligence agency 'Organization for the Protection of the Security of Afghanistan' known as AGSA, hunted down anyone suspected of expressing anti-regime sentiment.

Najibullah in his message, on the third anniversary of enforcement of the constitution said the state would defend democracy and independence at all cost. The constitution laid the basis of a new state order on the principles of parliamentary and political pluralism, leading to participation of the masses of Afghan society, parties, political and social organizations in the state administration, implementation of national

reconciliation and establishment of nation wide peace in Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> However, the parliamentary elections were held during April 6-15, 1988, in regions which remained under the control of the state and a majority of seats were allocated to People Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) members in advance in order to consolidate the regime's hold to power. After the conquest of Kabul by the *Mujahideen* which ended into inter-group violent conflicts among different *jihadi* groups, prevented the emergence of a national and broad based government in Afghanistan, as the whole territory was divided among different *jihadi* groups who were mostly created on ethnic and religious sectarian bases. The chaos paved the way for the emergence of Taliban who were initially welcomed by the people who were fed-up of *jihadi* inter-group conflict and were looking for a new force to eliminate the evil power of *jihadi* groups and instead set the base for a broad based national government, to be able to deal efficiently with the legacy of *Mujahideen's* armed conflicts including insecurity, lawlessness and barbarism, poverty, unemployment, health issues, illiteracy, and so on. After the conquest of Kabul by the Taliban in 1996, Mullah Omer assured the Afghans that democracy and human rights will have a place in his Islamic state. But he wanted the scholars to discuss the place of democracy and human rights in Afghanistan according to the Islamic law. His message also pointed out that the Taliban movement is an Islamic movement and there are no differences among Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara and other Afghan ethnic groups, all Afghan ethnic groups will be treated equally.<sup>14</sup> However, Taliban's behavior regarding the ethnic cleansing of other ethnic groups explained their brutal militant policy. Ceasing of *Nawruz* celebration, *Ashura* Festival, banning women's education, forcing men to keep long beard and wear only traditional cloths, stopping Afghanistan's Hindus and Sikhs from their religious practices, eroded Taliban's earlier claims. Mullah Omer wielded considerable power, to the extent that without his advice and instruction, no body dared to do anything independently.<sup>15</sup>

Ironically, political leaders constantly used the concepts of democracy, equality, freedom and meritocracy as political means to safeguard their hold on power and preclude public upheaval against the government. While at some other times, these concepts have been used instrumentally by the opposition of the government to accumulate the support of masses or to justify military coup to acquire legitimization. The introduction of democratic principles did not reduce the problem but made it even more intense. There is great danger that election candidates try to pick up votes

by pitching their argument along ethnic and religious lines as it happened during the presidential election of 2014. The authority of the state became concentrated in the hands of one ethnic, tribal or regional grouping, and large parts of the population feel unrepresented. Exclusion of one or more ethnic religious groups from the center of power has been so far fatal and the main deterrent to the formation of a broad-based and inclusive national regime in Afghanistan since its emergence as nation-state in 1890s.

### DEMOCRACY BUILDING AND ELECTIONS IN THE POST-TALIBAN ERA

The collapse of the state in Afghanistan has had many disastrous consequences, but in the light of removal of the Taliban from power, there was a real opportunity for Afghanistan to develop new political institutions to guarantee citizens fair and free participation and respond to the existing political, social, economic and security challenges. Nonetheless, the Bonn Agreement of December 2001 on the political future of Afghanistan has left many questions unanswered, and some of the most important being whether, and if so to what extent and in what ways, power could be shared between different levels of government. In the past, such questions produced sharply polarized responses from different ethnic groups' commentators, with some critical of the performance of a centralized state while others fearing the consequences of a decentralisation of power.<sup>16</sup>

After the international community's intervention led by the United States at the end of 2001, the United States Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, played an ethnic chauvinistic role rather than a constructive role for the establishment of broad-based and democratic regime in Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup> He diverted the US mission of nation-state building toward ethnicization of Afghanistan in favor of his fellow Pashtun Hamid Karzai.<sup>18</sup> During the 2004 election, the U.S. embassy, which was headed by Khalilzad, paraded Karzai around the country to events where he could cut a ribbon on an American-funded school or clinic in order to demonstrate to the villagers how much better off they would be with Karzai in the palace. The embassy had little time for rival candidates. One American diplomat recalled his struggle to arrange a meeting for another Afghan politician who wanted to explore running against Karzai. The diplomat said: "I got stone-walled. The order to the political section was that the presidential candidate was Karzai and no one else. They were not to meet with others."<sup>19</sup>

The Afghan presidential election in 2004 generated considerable

popular enthusiasm though its result was largely considered to be pre-determined in favor of interim President Karzai. The primary importance of this election was not the selection of the president. Rather it was as a de facto popular referendum on the Bonn Agreement and as a sign that this political process would continue with the endorsement of the people. The elections should have begun to yield a solid foundation for building the institutions required for democracy. The poll succeeded as far as the primary purpose was concerned –millions of voters who risked violence to vote, expressed support for a new beginning across a broad range of communities. It was, however, far less successful in establishing a strong base for Afghanistan’s ongoing democratisation.<sup>20</sup> As an event the election was a success, despite widespread hesitations. It was a proxy for a referendum on the Bonn Agreement. However, as the vehicle for advancing toward democratic transition, the elections were less successful. Since the election was treated more as an event, a punctuation point in a peacekeeping mission,<sup>21</sup> insufficient attention was paid by Afghans and the international community to build sustaining key electoral institutions. Despite their high cost, the political value of elections happened, but democratisation did not follow. The instrumental use of democracy and election with no bond to democratic principles and values, had led to democratic tragedy during the presidential election of 2009. Three days before the presidential election on August 20, 2009, Carney wrote to Eikenberry that, “We have information about wholesale fraud planned in Kandahar,” where Ahmad Wali Karzai ran the province. Carney wrote to Eikenberry that: “I believe you should tell Karzai we have good information on attempts by his supporters to engage in fraud with ballot boxes. If this happens, it will be detected and the consequences are incalculable”<sup>22</sup>

U.S. involvement was also ridiculous during the presidential election of 2009– a 180 degree u-turn of the United States’ policy during the presidential election of 2009, as compared to that of 2004, when Karzai had exclusively received support from United States’ embassy in Kabul headed by Zalmay Khalilzad.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, during the presidential election of 2009, the U.S. embassy was buying commercial airline tickets to fly Karzai’s opponent to campaign events and also allowing candidates to use its airplanes. Carney described the fraud as “massive, unbridled, unsophisticated, blatant and untrammelled”, in a Democracy International report eight months after the vote. “Ten votes in the box became one hundred on the results sheet, the extra zero added later, in different

handwriting.” Losing candidates showed up in election offices carrying cardboard boxes full of shredded votes. At least fifteen candidates reported that election staff members at tally centers were asking for seven dollars per vote. “To off voting” where election staffers marked the leftover ballots for their preferred candidates, was common. At markets in Kandahar, voter registration cards were being sold in bundles of three hundred. Similarly, in Khost Province, one registration card cast was \$10 in the market.<sup>24</sup> In station after station, hundreds of pages of identical ballots showed Karzai winning 100 percent of the votes. The counting of ballots was unobserved. U.S. military intelligence officers in Kandahar reported to their Kabul headquarters that there were more votes for President Karzai across the south than the actual number of voters and that Ahmad Wali Karzai had a major hand in that. Abdul Raziq, the young border police commander and Karzai ally, stored ballot boxes overnight inside his own home.<sup>25</sup> A Canadian adviser in Kandahar reported: “They ripped ballots out and stuff them in. You could see they just marked them all in the same hand. It was such an amateurish, idiotic attempt, so incredibly, childish transparent”.<sup>26</sup>

More than three thousand complaints about fraud poured in from across the country. The Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) decided that only the most blatant cases would be scrutinized. The Independent Election Commission found that Karzai had won 54.6 percent of the vote, the ECC found that of 3 million votes for Hamid Karzai, at least 800,000 were fraudulent and would be wiped away, costing him his majority.<sup>27</sup> The assembly of Pashtuns tried to convince Eikenberry to announce Karzai as the winner of the first round, but it did not get positive result.<sup>28</sup> The international pressures, left Karzai with no option but to accept the second round of election after two months.<sup>29</sup> A decisive second-round win over Abdullah Abdullah would vindicate Karzai and legitimize the election. Abdullah was convinced that the system was so rotten, it could not be trusted and he decided to drop out of the race.<sup>30</sup> That left Karzai damaged, discredited, feeling betrayed – a winner by default. Karzai willfully disregarded the obvious and voluminous evidence that his supporters had tried to cheat him to victory. But the United States acted with ugly hypocrisy, touting the rhetoric of democracy while scheming against the favored candidate. It managed to humiliate Karzai but not defeat him.<sup>31</sup>

The first round of the presidential election on April 5, 2014, was considered good. It was told as an upbeat narrative, with high turnout and smiles, as a stand for democracy. Even though a news black-out on

the Taliban violence and lack of proper audit for fraud meant, we never knew exactly how the first round had gone, still, it created genuine hope for the future. Most votes had gone to Abdullah Abdullah with 45 percent, Ashraf Ghani acquired 31.56 percent, and Zalmay Rassul at the third place maintained only 11.37. Ghani was seen as Pashtun candidate, while Abdullah was seen as Tajik candidate. The vote looked to be, not just an endorsement of the state and the current political system, but there was hope that the leader who emerged from the election would have a strong enough mandate to actually be able to tackle the grave security and economic problems facing Afghanistan. Failure of the candidates to acquire the majority of the vote (50+1) at the first round led the election to the second round. The narrative of the second round, however, was contested from the start. From Election Day on June 14, 2014 onwards, Abdullah repeated his belief that he suffered massive fraud at the hands of Ashraf Ghani, the Independent Election Commission and the state what his camp called the 'triangle of fraud'. Zia Ul-Haq Amarkhai, the Chief Electoral Officer for the Independent Election Commission, was caught red handed by the Kabul police, when he was illegally transporting ballot boxes to Surobi District of Kabul by a truck for cheating in favor of Ashraf Ghani.<sup>32</sup> Later on, Amarkhail's mobile voice calls released by the media, showed that Amarkhail was managing a big electoral fraud in cooperation with Ashraf Ghani's regional electoral team members to prevent Abdullah's win.<sup>33</sup> Documents also showed that Abdullah Abdullah's votes had been burnt by Ashraf Ghani's team in southern provinces. Meanwhile, a large number of fake ballot cards were used during the second round of the election in the south, south-east, and eastern provinces of Afghanistan in favor of Ashraf Ghani.<sup>34</sup> Rahmatullah Nabil, the former Head of the Afghanistan National Directorate of Security (ANDS) and also the former Home Minister Mohammad Omer Daudzai, publicly announced through the national media that Karzai's team secretly placed the ballot printing machines in several houses in Wazir Mohammad Akbar Khan Mena, Kabul, printed ballot sheets illegally and filled out ballot boxes in favour of Ashraf Ghani during the Presidential election of 2014.<sup>35</sup>

The second round of election marked ethnic polarization, particularly of the two largest communities who both tended to vote for the man they perceived as their own – Pashtuns for Ghani and Tajiks for Abdullah. Despite all the pressures for making a political settlement of the election-related deadlock in Afghanistan many attempts failed to resolve the dispute between the two candidates. John Kerry during his first visit during

July 11-12, 2014, proposed a solution for the deadlock that both candidates better come to an agreement for holding a full audit and be bound by its result and form a national unity government.<sup>36</sup> The direct involvement of the so called Independent Election Commission's members including the highest rank such as the Electoral Commission Head – Ahmad Yusuf Nuristani, and the Chief Electoral Officer – Zia Ul-Haq Amarkhail led Abdullah Abdullah to never trust the auditing process, as he believed that the 'Independent Election Commission' is not "independent" anymore, it is dependent, corrupt and had entirely lost its credibility for the people of Afghanistan. Based on the evidence that Abdullah's team provided and released through media showing the systemic fraud by the triangle of Karzai, Election Commission and the Ashraf Ghani team, Abdullah Abdullah warned the state against releasing the fabricated result of the bias audit by the 'Fraudful Election Commission'.

Finally, on September 21, 2014, after months of gridlock following a nastily contested election, each candidate honestly thought and continued to believe he had won. The possibility of secession and civil war was high, and this matter convinced the United States to act immediately and end the chaos that emerged out of this election. John Kerry stated: "I invited both candidates and their teams into the ambassador's residence at our embassy. I put my hand on Ghani's shoulder and said, Ashraf, you are going to be president. Abdullah will help you implement a common agenda. But you have to be willing to transfer real power to him and give him the opportunity to share in governance, because it is in the interest of the country".<sup>37</sup>

The two presidential contesting candidates Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani finally signed a power-sharing deal to form a National Unity Government (NUG). As part of the arrangement, Ghani became Afghanistan's president while Abdullah assumed the newly created position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who heads the cabinet. The agreement was intended to bring both sides on board. The National Unity Government has been shaky because of the vagueness of the power sharing agreement that framed the government and widely diverging interpretations of their powers and authority. Abdullah believes that the agreement gave him an equal share in government; while Ghani insists that ultimate power, as defined in the constitution, resides in the presidency.<sup>38</sup> Even where the agreement is being implemented, notably on appointments to senior civil and military posts, both sides are stacking the government and security agencies with allies, mainly on ethnic grounds,

with Ghani favoring fellow Pashtuns and Abdullah fellow Tajiks. The resultant perception of discrimination within excluded communities, exacerbated by the lack of consultation, including on development program, is contributing to a widening ethnic and regional divide.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the fact that ethnic diversity has played a major role in Afghanistan's political instability and chaos, yet there is no clear census to determine the exact population of each ethnic group in Afghanistan. It is more than five years since the enactment of Civil Registration Law, that the Afghanistan government has not been able to distribute electronic identity cards (EIDCs) to Afghanistan citizens. The first EIDC was expected to be issued to former Afghan president Hamid Karzai as he signed the 'Civil Registration Law' passed by the parliament on 2013. Since then the issue of EIDCs has been repeatedly raised but delayed due to citizens' intense opposition. The main reason for suspension of the process has been penning the word 'Afghan' as a nationality for all citizens of Afghanistan. Non-Pashtun ethnic groups are opposed to the insertion of the word 'Afghan' as their nationality, as they consider it as a forceful imposition of one ethnic identity over other ethnic groups. The distribution of EIDCs is very important, it will greatly help the transparency of the upcoming elections. Clear census of ethnic communities can also help to undermine the unreal claims and the exaggeration by ethnic leaders regarding the size of their ethnic groups – especially those who are keen to politically exploit other ethnic groups. It could also pave the way to map Afghanistan's heterogeneous society by establishing an efficient and responsive political system, which could bring satisfaction to all ethnic groupings in Afghanistan.

The national unity government could not deliver any of its promises, including holding *Loya Jirga* for the formalization of the political regime and shift toward parliamentarism. Neither did the NUG establish a competent and neutral electoral commission to act as independent entity and hold a transparent and inclusive parliamentary election on the assigned date. The Afghanistan parliamentary election has been held after three years delay, it was full of fraud. The election has not been held in Ghazni province and many other districts due to the strong presence of Taliban. Kandahar parliamentary election was held after a week on October 27, 2018. Several months passed from parliamentary election, yet the result of election for many provinces including Kabul as the capital are not announced. Recently, President Ghani fired all the commissioners of the Election Commissions who directed fraud-tainted parliamentary elections

on October 20, 2018.<sup>40</sup> The members of the election commissions are accused of bias, fraud, bribery and corruption. The presidential election which was supposed to be held on April 20, 2019, has been postponed. Meanwhile, Zalmay Khalilzad as the United States special envoy for political reconciliation, tirelessly negotiates with the Taliban for a political settlement in the absence of Afghanistan government's representatives. The strong presence of Taliban, inefficiency of national unity government to tackle fundamental changes and lead the country toward democratic evolution, as well as, the United States standpoint for political settlement of Afghanistan conflict, strengthen the argument for the establishment of a transitional government in which the Taliban would be the main counterpart in the near future.

### CONCLUSION

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Afghanistan found the golden opportunity to establish a broad based democratic regime in which all citizens' equal rights are guaranteed. It was also expected that the Afghanistan government would pave the ground for fair and free election and resolve the existing political, social and economic challenges. However, lack of detailed planning and confining the overall state building program to Kabul and few big cities has led Afghanistan's government to failure. Afghanistan government could neither tackle the existing political, social and economic challenges such as insecurity, corruption, poverty, unemployment, religious extremism, nor did it succeed in establishing a truly democratic regime through fair, transparent and inclusive election. The striking contradiction between center and countryside became the dominant line of conflict in Afghanistan. The cities above all Kabul, have been the development engine of the state and of modernization, while more traditional social structures persist in the rural areas. Economic imbalance and also different social conception have divided Afghanistan society – the enforcement of liberal values over traditional rural societies with different code of conduct is a challenging task. Large parts of the rural population consider modernity as anti-Islamic and a threat to the survival of the traditional social order. The government failure to maintain security, employment, social and economic services, no doubt, paved the way for the Taliban movement and other extremist groups drawing support of the population which felt neglected economically, politically, and socially in the rural areas.

Expansion of the Taliban control over a large part of Afghanistan's territory; expansion of ISIS especially in the east province of Nigarhar; unemployment, poverty, corruption, nepotism, ethnic discrimination has proved NUG's incompetence to lead Afghanistan toward stability and peace. Similarly, failure of NUG to distribute the electronic identity cards to determine the exact number of Afghanistan population; politicization of Afghanistan Election Commission, as well as existence of hundred thousand fake national identity cards attested with voter stickers and most recently the US initiated peace process for political reconciliation with the Taliban who are convicted for massive war crimes, genocide and intense human rights violations has created huge tension among the citizens and reduced expectations for the formation of a truly democratic government to safeguard citizens' fundamental rights in future. Democratic development in Afghanistan would require fundamental evolution in many areas, including the true separation of power among the three branches – legislature, executive and judiciary; evolution of political culture from tribal loyalty to state centrism, literacy upgrade, civil society building, economic development, media and communication, and establishment of an effective mechanism to take control of religious affairs and adapt religion in support of state's modernization policies.

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6. By the mid-1970s, Pashtuns occupied up to 70 per cent of top and middle-level positions in Afghanistan's civil and military hierarchies. See Amin Saikal. *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*. New York, I.B. Tauris, 2004. p. 146.
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15. Marsden Peter. *The Taliban: War, Religion, and the New Order in Afghanistan*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1998. p. 65.
16. William Maley. Reconstituting State Power in Afghanistan. In Micheline Centivres-Demont (eds.), *Afghanistan: Identity, Society and Politics Since 1980*. London, I.B. Tauris, 2002. p. 156.
17. "Karzai was frustrated about Zahir Shah that he might be interested to head the transnational government...I mentioned Karzai to not say anything negative about Zahir Shah to others... After I confirmed with King Zahir Shah that he is not interested to head the transitional government, I returned to Karzai and remind him, don't you want to persuade the Northern Alliance to give up one of the ministries? The problem was that Karzai did not have much leverage. The Northern Alliance was likely to make concessions if, in exchange, we resolved the issue regarding the king's role. Karzai brightened." For more details see: Zalmay Khalilzad. *The Envoy: From Kabul to the White House, My Journey through a Turbulent World*. New York, St. Martin's Press, 2016. pp. 144-50.
18. "I approached Pashtun leaders with a different message. I told them that the United States wanted the Pashtuns to have a fair role in the post-Taliban transition. I suggested, however, that this could only happen if Pashtun leaders earned the support of both the Afghan people and the international community. I reminded them that the Northern Alliance's stronger organization and consistent opposition to the Taliban had endeared them to the international community". See Zalmay Khalilzad, *Ibid*, p. 118.
19. "Did we help him win the election?" Colonel David Lamm, who was the chief of staff for the U.S. military commander in Kabul at the time, asked me. "Yeah. You are damn right. He was our guy. And we wanted him to win. He was very honorable guy. All of us thought highly of him." For more detail see: Joshua Partlow, *A Kingdom of their Own: The Family Karzai and the Afghan Disaster*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2016. p. 23.
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23. "Before the first election, the U.S. embassy, then led by Zalmay Khalilzad, would parade Karzai around the country to events where he could cut a ribbon on an American-funded school or clinic in order to demonstrate to villagers how much better off they were with Karzai in the palace. The embassy had little time for rival candidates. One American diplomat recalled struggling to arrange a meeting for another Afghan politician who wanted to explore running against Karzai...Khalilzad's order to the political section was that the presidential candidate was Karzai and no one else. They were not to meet with others." *Ibid*, pp. 19, 23.
24. "Fraud Casts Shadow Over Afghan Vote." *Al Jazeera English*, 17 August 2009,

- [Online: Web], Access August 18, 2009, URL, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZUsDGDND0E>
25. Joshua Partlow. *op. cit.*, pp. 33-4.
  26. *Ibid.*
  27. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6
  28. The assembly of *Pashtun* leaders argued with Eikenberry that forcing a second round on the nation would mean more chaos and uncertainty; avoiding it would spare a lot of bloodshed. One Pashtun minister told Eikenberry, "Ambassador, you don't have to do this, you have options. This election can be decided in President Karzai's favor." While Eikenberry slammed his fist on the table and said, "Do you think we have American soldiers here risking their lives to secure this election so that you can make a mockery of it?" He continued, "There were no rules. It was the jungle, now you are returning to the jungle. What we are talking about is rules. The rules aren't perfect. But if you don't follow them, you are going back to the jungle. This is your chance." When the Pashtuns met later at the palace with Karzai, their message was simple: you can either have the majority of the vote from the first round, or you can have the United States of America. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9
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# SECURITY CHALLENGES IN AFGHANISTAN, POST-2014

PURNIMA SHARMA

## INTRODUCTION

With the countdown of the withdrawal of foreign troops in 2014, the security challenges and responsibility of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) increased. It was the year of political and security transition of Afghanistan where on the one hand President Ashraf Ghani took oath as the newly elected President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the ANSF took charge of the security from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on the other. Post-2014, Afghanistan faced numerous strikes from the insurgents with high number of casualties of foreign troops, Afghan soldiers and the civilians. However, the challenges to Afghanistan security are not confined to terrorism only, but there are several other factors. After analyzing the situation in depth, this paper deals with the security challenges as a result of two factors: internal and external<sup>1</sup>. The external challenges have been the three Anglo-Afghan Wars, invasion by the Soviet Union, dirtiest six years of the Taliban rule, the United States' (US) intervention, presence of the foreign terrorist groups [Al-Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden, Taliban and the Islamic State (IS)] and threats from the neighboring countries such as Pakistan. On the other side, the list of the internal challenges is vast, for example, unstable government, corruption in all sectors of government (political, economic and social), weak security and defense sector due to lack of required number of soldiers, illiteracy among the soldiers, lack of proper training and equipment, police corruption, weak air power capability, high military casualties, ethnic differences among the soldiers and the rise of insurgent

groups in the country. All these challenges have threatened and weakened the internal and external security of Afghanistan. The war-torn country is now known as a 'terrorists hub'. Though, different governments tried and have been trying to strengthen the security by adopting various measures and policies including the bilateral agreements and strategic partnerships with other nations, but the Taliban remain the hurdle that prevents the government from making any progress in the country<sup>2</sup>.

No doubt, with international assistance Afghanistan's situation has been improving gradually since 2001 with high enrolment of students in the primary and secondary schools, improved health care system, larger participation of citizens in the electoral process, steady but progressing economy, increased female literacy, vast reconstruction and development projects. After President Ghani signed the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the US and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the NATO in 2014, the foreign troops shifted from their objective of the combat mission to the capacity building of the Afghan forces. These agreements finally led to the formation of the Resolute Support Mission (RSM). The new government and their policies at the local, regional and international level also have implications for the security and reconstruction development in Afghanistan. However, one cannot jump to the conclusion or predict the future of the war-ravaged country. One needs to analyse the security scenario of Afghanistan and its challenges in depth.

#### **BACKGROUND, 2001-2014**

Afghanistan is a landlocked country bordering six neighbors: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the North, China in the East, Pakistan in the North, Northeast and South, Iran in the West and South West. It links Central Asia, the Middle East and South Asia and has historical importance for the ancient Silk Route and migration routes for trade between Europeans and Chinese<sup>3</sup>. The geo-strategic location of Afghanistan turned it into a battleground for many direct and proxy wars through its history. These started even before its conquest by Alexander the Great (331-327 BCE), invasion of Hephthalites or White Huns (400 AD), Arabs (642-652), Genghis Khan (1219), invasion of the British troops which resulted in three Anglo-Afghan wars (1839-1842, 1878-1880 and 1919), Soviet invasion (1979-1989), the Taliban rule (1996-2001) and, finally, the US invasion in 2001 in retaliation of September 11, 2001 attack on twin towers of the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York and Pentagon in

Washington D. C. by the terrorists who were supposed to be hiding in Afghanistan<sup>4</sup>. After the heinous act by the Al-Qaeda terrorists which killed 3,000 people in the US, the latter launched air strikes on the Afghan soil under the military campaign 'Operation Enduring Freedom' and deployed around 9,000 American troops in Kabul<sup>5</sup>. The operation was also known as President Bush's 'Global War on Terror'<sup>6</sup>.

The counter terrorism mission against the Taliban was initiated by the US under the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1373 on September 28, 2001 which allowed to use force against Afghanistan<sup>7</sup>. Few weeks after the operation, the international community convened a Conference at Bonn in Germany under the UN auspices on December 5, 2001 to decide the political (democratic government) future of Afghanistan and Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun, was made the head of administration<sup>8</sup>. On 20 December 2001, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) (numbered 4,800) was deployed in Afghanistan under the UN Security Council Resolution 1386, earlier under the British command, to maintain the security in Kabul and its surrounding areas<sup>9</sup>. At the same time, Hamid Karzai was chosen as the interim President in a *Loya Jirga* in 2002, until the next elections to be held by mid-2004<sup>10</sup>.

October 2004 was the beginning of a new era in Afghanistan as the country held its first national democratic elections and Hamid Karzai was elected as the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The Karzai government faced many challenges to improve the political, economic and social sectors in the country and, especially, in providing security to Afghan citizens. Several mafias (drug traffickers), militia and extremist groups continuously tried to disrupt the policies of the government. The Karzai government urged the ISAF to expand its role beyond Kabul. In 2004, the ISAF extended its operations to northern provinces and increased the number of troops from 6,250 to 8,500 in 2005<sup>11</sup>. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) established by the ISAF and the US in Bamiyan, Kunduz, Gardez and Mazar-e-Sharif administered aid projects and military support. Besides, the Taliban were also growing in number and area-wise and kept on showing their presence through various terrorist activities posing serious challenge to the ISAF. The year 2006 once again proved to be the most challenging since the foreign troops started their Counter Insurgency (COIN) mission in Afghanistan. It forced the governments of NATO members and allies to adopt a new strategy and tactics to deal with the terrorists. The Taliban troops numbered between 32,000 to 40,000 in 2008<sup>12</sup>.

There were high-profile Taliban attacks, including a bomb blast at Bagram air base while the US Vice President Dick Cheney was visiting it; the kidnap of 23 South Korean Christian missionaries, two of whom were killed, leading to the withdrawal of all 200 Korean troops from the coalition force; the killing of scores of people by suicide bombers, for example at a dogfight near Kandahar; an attack on the Serena Hotel in Kabul, popular among foreigners, in which six people were killed; bomb blast at the Indian embassy in Kabul, in which more than 50 people were killed. In 2008, gunmen opened fire on Karzai at a military parade in Kabul, killing three people.<sup>13</sup> Karzai escaped unhurt.

The year 2009 was the onset of second phase of political and security transition due to the Presidential elections in Afghanistan and the US on which the fate of the country depended. Hamid Karzai was re-elected as the President of Afghanistan in 2009. Afghans called the elections as a big fraud because of high level of corruption involved during the election campaign<sup>14</sup>. On the other hand, Barack Obama became the President of United States in January 2009. Soon after, he paid attention to Afghanistan which had been diverted to the war in Iraq since 2003. He sent 17,000 troops to Afghanistan to add to the 36,000 American soldiers already deployed there<sup>15</sup>. An American General Stanley McChrystal, the ISAF commander in Afghanistan requested the Obama administration for 40,000 additional troops to execute the true COIN approach of 'clear, hold and build' and after three months President Obama deployed 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan<sup>16</sup>. As regards the ANSF, the recruitment was increased from 6,000 at the end of 2003 to 172,920 in July 2009. However, casualties among the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) also increased with 13,729 killed and 16,511 wounded between 2001 to 2014<sup>17</sup>.

During the first year of his presidency, Obama came up with a new 'Af-Pak Strategy' covering political, economic and military dimensions of the conflict covering both the countries, as Pakistan was providing safe havens to several terrorist organizations including the Taliban. Obama administration wanted to train the ANSF in order to carry out counter-terrorism operations against the terrorists. Obama talked at the Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan in July 2010 about transferring the responsibility of the operational control from the US/ISAF to ANSF by 2013 by implementing the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A)<sup>18</sup>. The Karzai government and the NATO endorsed the *Intequal*- a transition period when the Afghan government would take full

responsibility for security, governance and overall development of the country<sup>19</sup>. The final decision was taken at the November 2010 Lisbon NATO Summit attended by Hamid Karzai<sup>20</sup>. Earlier, Obama had said that 10,000 American troops would withdraw before the end of 2011. On 2 May 2011, American Navy SEALs tracked the compound of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden at Abbottabad in Pakistan under the secret mission 'Operation Geronimo' and killed him<sup>21</sup>. Few weeks after the victorious mission, Obama announced that 33,000 troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by September 2012, but the draw-down process was slowed when out-going Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Afghan commander David Patraeus persuaded the US President to do so<sup>22</sup>.

In fact, President Karzai launched the 'Afghan Peace Initiative' during the London Conference on 28 January 2010 which was being praised at the domestic and international levels. Four months later he tried to reach out to the Taliban but lost support of his coalition partners who were members of the Northern Alliance and even the Taliban refused to recognize his legitimacy and wanted to talk directly to the US<sup>23</sup>. The ISAF also grew to the strength of 1,31,000 by December 2010 and more than 1,200 insurgents were killed. But there were high number of casualties of around 711 among the foreign troops and more than 2,700 civilian deaths<sup>24</sup>. The US and NATO also increased efforts and funds for the capacity building training of the ANSF which reached \$20 billion in 2010 and 2011 equalling the total investment from 2002 to 2009<sup>25</sup>.

In order to increase cooperation, coordination, and mutual understanding including advancing peace, security and stability in Afghanistan, the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement was signed on 2 May 2012 between Afghanistan and USA. On 21 May 2012, at the Chicago Summit Declaration on Afghanistan, the Heads of State and Government of Afghanistan and the nations contributing to the NATO-led ISAF, specifically the participants committed to a sovereign, secure, and democratic Afghanistan, acknowledged that the ISAF's mission would be concluded by the end of 2014, but the partnership would continue through the NATO-led mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF)<sup>26</sup>.

By October 2013, the ANSF was taking the lead in security operations against the Taliban but the latter also became aggressive and expanded its reach to the north, northeast, west, south and southwest region by carrying fierce strikes using various tactics such as assassination, Improvised Explosive Device (IED), suicide bombings, kidnappings and torture.

Afghanistan witnessed series of bombings and suicide attacks on the Indian consulate in Herat and rocket attacks on Kabul Airport<sup>27</sup>. The year 2013 was the bloodiest and most challenging for the Afghan government and people. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Taliban launched 962 attacks in 2013 resulting in 2,959 civilians killed and 4,821 wounded out of which 796 women and children were killed and over 2,400 were wounded. In the first six months of 2014, 1,564 civilians were killed (17% increase) and 3,289 were wounded (28% increase)<sup>28</sup>.

The rigorous security breaches by the insurgents and terrorists in Afghanistan showed many loopholes in the counter terrorism strategy of the NATO/ISAF and weakness of the ANSF. Many blamed Karzai government for failing to provide a secure environment for Afghan citizens due to high level of corruption in his government. Afghanistan ranked the most corrupt country in the world (with North Korea and Somalia), according to Transparency International report of 2013<sup>29</sup>. When the Afghan constitution was drafted in 2004 under the US tutelage, it contained the seeds of centralized presidency without proper checks and balances. Gradually, the people of Afghanistan lost faith in the Karzai government and the democratic process. Even the ANA and ANP faced challenges at the professional and institutional levels, for instance, at the professional level, lack of motivation and salary is the main reason of the recruitment among uneducated Afghans; and at the institutional level: lack of effective leadership due to the appointment of senior officers on political considerations rather than professionalism<sup>30</sup>. Besides, the ANA requires full training to develop COIN skills, logistic support with more sophisticated arms and full functioning army, proper management system to develop sufficient commanders and leaders, basic education to reach the high levels of literacy with the time, motivational programs in order to avoid ethnic tensions among the soldiers and improved salary to decrease corruption and bribery<sup>31</sup>. Despite these aforementioned shortcomings and lack of capability and skills, ANSF had performed well in 2013, according to a comprehensive study in February 2014 by the US CNA Corporation<sup>32</sup>.

The favorable time came for the Taliban when President Karzai refused to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the US even after getting approval from the *Loya Jirga* in 2013, which permitted the continued presence of the US forces after 2014. The draft of the BSA included that the US would have control of nine military bases at Kabul, Bagram, Mazar-e-Sharif in north, Herat in the west, Kandahar in the

south, Shindand in Herat province, Sharab in Helmand province in the south, Gardez south of Kabul, and Jalalabad in the east, after 2014 for an indefinite period<sup>33</sup>. Hamid Karzai believed that the US had no interest to leave Afghanistan because of its 'New Great Game' against Russia and China which further strained the relations between both the governments in Kabul and Washington<sup>34</sup>.

There was general fear among the Afghans that once international troops withdrew, the country would have to experience the old horrible time of pre-2001 under the Taliban rule as the latter was not getting weak but rather growing with the help of other terrorist/militia groups, financial support and delivery of arms and ammunition by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. As the year 2014, the time of the withdrawal of foreign troops (US/ISAF), approached, Afghanistan started facing various political, economic, social and security challenges. However, the NATO allies showed their commitment to provide \$40 billion annually to support the Armed Forces in Afghanistan post-2014, along with additional \$40 billion as a non-military assistance<sup>35</sup>.

#### POST-2014 SECURITY CHALLENGES IN AFGHANISTAN UNDER PRESIDENT ASHRAF GHANI

When Ashraf Ghani was elected as the President of Afghanistan on September 28, 2014, he immediately reached an understanding with the US and signed the BSA on September 30, 2014 and the Status of Forces Agreement (SoFA) with the NATO which also formed the foundation for the RSM<sup>36</sup>. Now, he had to accomplish the tasks which were being delayed for the past 13 years, such as to stabilize the government, fight corruption, provide and maintain peace and security, combat terrorism, provide basic health-care, enhance the quality of education, eliminate poverty, reduce unemployment, improve economy, build reconstruction development programs, reforms in the local government for the new constitution-making process and most importantly to keep friendly relations with the neighbors.

The biggest challenge for the newly elected President was to curb the problem of Taliban attacks and make people feel secure. Due to lack of adequate measures and the government policy to provide security and the failure of international troops to curb terrorism from the country, Afghan people and even police and army began to support the Taliban, especially in the most insecure and remote areas. As a result, some Afghan forces attacked the foreign troops. Afghan government and the Allied

forces recognized that only military means will not resolve the problem of terrorism and, that they would have to bring the Taliban on the table. But due to lack of unity among the three main actors involved in the conflict, i.e. Afghan government, the US and Pakistan, the political solution also failed<sup>37</sup>. Taliban, the fourth main actor was not ready for any negotiations unless its three demands were met: first, all foreign troops should immediately leave the country; second, terminate all government contracts with the US; and finally, establishment of the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan<sup>38</sup>. The conditions set by the Taliban posed serious security challenges to be handled by Ashraf Ghani, the new President.

The year 2014 was the deadliest, Afghanistan had witnessed due to the resurgence of Taliban and large number of insurgencies. The insurgents carried out large number of attacks during that year in which 3,699 Afghan civilians were killed, almost 7,000 wounded and around 5,000 men from the ANA and ANP lost their lives<sup>39</sup>. These terrible strikes by the terrorists raised questions over the capability of the ANSF, after the withdrawal of foreign troops at the end of the year. This led to a debate among governments, experts and scholars around the world about the future of Afghanistan post-2014 and some even predicted that the country would go back to the 'Taliban ages'. Even President Ghani realized the presence of the IS (Islamic State) in Afghanistan and urged the US to re-think about the time of withdrawal. But his concern was not appreciated by the RSM Commander. In January 2015, the report of the IS presence was confirmed by the Afghan government and international media. On 29 December 2014, the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) was signed between the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan) and the Afghan Ministry of Interior to reaffirm the European Union's (EU) continuous support and collaboration with Afghanistan in the post-2014 period<sup>40</sup>. The EUPOL had been providing training to ANP since 2009 and promised to continue it in order to deal with the threats from the Taliban and other insurgent/militia groups. The country's security is largely dependent on the ANA but, according to the Special Inspector General to Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), the number of ANA personnel including the Air Forces was 1,69,203 as on November 2014 which was the lowest number since 2011<sup>41</sup>. The BSA also came into force on January 1, 2015 till the period 2024 and may be beyond that unless either party terminates it on two years notice. As per the agreement, 10,000 American troops would remain in Afghanistan after December 2014.

The beginning of the year 2015 was also not good as 171 soldiers or

police and 108 civilians were killed and 800 were injured only in January. The Afghan TOLO news channel informed that the Afghan Security forces inflicted higher casualties on the insurgents killing 1,324 in January 2015<sup>42</sup>. On 1 January 2015, the NATO-led RSM was launched which ended the direct combat role of the troops and increased emphasis on capacity building of the ANSF. In March 2015, during an official visit to the US by President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, Obama announced that the current number of American troops would remain in Afghanistan till 2016 and would be reduced by some 5,000 by the end of 2016-17. The NATO members, Germany, Turkey and Italy also supported the decision and allowed the current deployment of 850, 760, and 500 troops, respectively, to stay in Afghanistan through 2016<sup>43</sup>. As of November 2015, the RS mission was composed of troops from 40 nations (25 NATO Allies and 15 partner nations), consisting of 11,385 NATO and 1,725 partner personnel across 21 bases totalling 13,110 personnel. The United States remained the largest force contributor in Afghanistan<sup>44</sup>.

The biggest setback came to the Western-backed ANSF when the Taliban seized Kunduz Province in the north of Afghanistan in September 2015. Though it lasted for few days, it showed the strong presence of the Taliban<sup>45</sup>. The high-profile attacks were carried out by the Taliban from January to November 2015 with modified tactics and launching direct attacks on the ANDSF checkpoints that attracted media attention and created a sense of insecurity among the Afghans by showing their government's inability to provide them security. On 15 October 2015, President Obama reaffirmed the US strategy and objectives to disrupt the threats of Al-Qaeda by finding political solutions, supporting the ANSF by capacity building, and giving opportunity to Afghan people to succeed as they stand their own<sup>46</sup>. The Resolute Support (RS) team conducted TAA mission- train, advise and assist the ANSF. But it faced many challenges due to the lack of effective and accountable leadership (important to improve ANDSF and ensure their success), delay in resource management and strategic planning processes and the intervention of the senior leaders at the operational and tactical levels<sup>47</sup>.

There were other international challenges that prevented the Afghan government to improve the defense and security sector, such as insufficient international funds, lack of cooperation between international donors, incapability of the international actors to stop or deal with Pakistan, which provides safe haven to the Taliban and other terrorist groups. At the same time, the foreign terrorist group, called the Islamic State (IS), also showed

its presence in the country by carrying out attacks in various regions in Afghanistan, such as suicide bomb attack on Kabul Bank in Jalalabad, Nangarhar that killed 35 and wounded over a hundred people. This attack was even condemned by the Taliban which denied any involvement<sup>48</sup>. On 7 August 2015, the insurgents launched the biggest suicide attack since 2001, which claimed 50 lives and wounded 350<sup>49</sup>. Though, the Taliban and IS are rivals and playing proxy war in Afghanistan, but their ambitions are similar: first, to keep the country insecure by threatening and attacking international troops, foreigners, Afghan police and army, government officials and employees, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) workers, civilians, especially through kidnapping, raping, torturing, killing women and children; and secondly, to establish the Islamic State in Afghanistan by bringing *Shariah* law.

The security situation seemed grim in 2016 too due to high number of casualties. The Security Council Report (2016) stated. "On 1 January, the Taliban exploded a bomb and engaged in a firefight at a restaurant in Kabul, leading to the death of a child and wounding 15 others. On 4 January, a bomb-filled truck exploded at a facility for workers in Kabul, killing one civilian and injuring another 22 civilians. A Taliban suicide bomber attacked a bus carrying media personnel in Kabul on 20 January, killing seven people and wounding more than 20; Council members issued a press statement condemning that attack. On 26 January, in Uruzgun province in south-central Afghanistan, a police officer allied with the Taliban poisoned ten of his co-workers, who were then shot to death by the Taliban. A police facility in Kabul was struck by a suicide bomber on 1 February, resulting in the deaths of more than 20 police officers. On 8 February, three people died as a result of a suicide bombing in Mazari Sharif in northern Balkh province"<sup>50</sup>. The dire situation in Afghanistan continued in the following years. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) report, the number of civilian casualties in 2018 were in record number reaching 3,804, including 927 children due to increased aerial attacks by the US-led forces and suicide bombings<sup>51</sup>.

#### PRESIDENT GHANI'S OVERTURES TO PAKISTAN AND TALIBAN

Soon after taking his oath, President Ashraf Ghani offered a sustained cooperation with Pakistan which he thought was much important than dealing with the Taliban. He tried to equate India-Pakistan relations with

Afghanistan and had private dialogue with Pakistan several times before his maiden visit to India in 2015<sup>52</sup>. Ghani provided Pakistan a central role to assist Afghanistan by achieving a comprehensive peace with the Taliban. In July 2015, Pakistan hosted a meeting between the High Peace Council Afghanistan and the Taliban without any end result. It was the first and significant development to bring two conflicting parties on the table. On 11 January 2016, the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG), which includes Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and the US, met in Islamabad, Pakistan to discuss the security situation in Afghanistan and dealing with Taliban, as the conflict was spilling over to neighboring countries. The QCG reconvened on 23 February 2016 in Kabul, in the absence of Taliban, to look into the dire situation of recruiting child soldiers in 2015 by the Army and pro-government militias and use of schools as base camps by the army and insurgents. These security challenges in Afghanistan were adversely affecting the political, economic and social progress needed to ensure the secure environment in the country. In mid-2016, President Obama announced further reduction in the US troops from 9,800 to 5,500 by early 2017, whereas the EUPOL mission, Afghanistan was also going to complete its term at the end of the year. Keeping in mind all these challenges, President Ghani sought more support from the neighbors, especially Pakistan, and other regional actors to ensure Afghanistan's security. Afghan government was also devising a new strategy to persuade the enemy.

At the same time, Ashraf Ghani also tried to negotiate with the Taliban and other terrorist groups after their Spring Offensive. However, during the *Ramadan* or fasting month from June 5-July 6, 2016, violence had increased with heavy casualties on both the ANDSF and Taliban sides<sup>53</sup>. Afghan officials confirmed that they lost strategically important district to the south of Lashkar Gah in southern Helmand Province to the Taliban in October 2016<sup>54</sup>. On 22 September 2016, a peace deal was signed between President Ghani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar from *Hezb-e-Islami*, which was a major development in Afghanistan during the past 15 years that could influence the Taliban and other militant groups present in the country<sup>55</sup>. Even after its success in retaking the lost territories from the Taliban, the ANDSF and ANA required support of the coalition forces to meet the challenges that limit their capability, such as, offensive maneuver capability, personnel management capability, leadership quality, logistic support, aviation capability, increasing coordination for planning processes, addressing corruption, etc. In July 2016, at NATO Summit in

Warsaw, the NATO members and RSM team agreed to continue their financial support of approximately \$900 million per year to the ANDSF till 2020, as combined contributions<sup>56</sup>. On 4-5 October 2016, the Conference on Afghanistan held in Brussels, was co-hosted by the European Union and Government of Afghanistan, to ensure the continued political and financial support for the latter by international donors for the next four years<sup>57</sup>. However, the Taliban continued their attack even at the beginning of 2017. On 10 January 2017, the Taliban claimed responsibility for the series of attacks in Kabul, Helmand and Kandahar provinces that claimed more than 70 lives<sup>58</sup>. In August 2018, Taliban seized the city of Ghazni, which is the main highway between Kabul and Kandahar, and caught Kabul and Washington off guards. The five-day counter attack by Afghan forces backed by the US air power claimed around hundred lives of Afghan soldiers and over 150 civilians<sup>59</sup>.

Throughout his term, President Ghani tried and has been trying to persuade Pakistan to come to a common understanding and urged Imran Khan (new Prime Minister of Pakistan, elected on 18 August 2018) to support Afghanistan in its effort to achieve a political settlement with the Taliban<sup>60</sup>. After various setbacks and the inability to persuade Pakistan to stop supporting the Taliban, President Ghani adopted a new policy towards Pakistan to meet the prolonged challenges faced by Afghanistan. He openly criticized Pakistan at the UN for its long time support to the Taliban and for harboring several terrorist groups. He again invited Islamabad for a comprehensive dialogue in order to prevent serious consequences<sup>61</sup>. At the same time, Ashraf Ghani repeatedly called Taliban to come to the table with the government and have political settlement, but the latter refused to even recognize Ghani government and called it a 'puppet' of the US<sup>62</sup>. In response, recently, Afghanistan filed a complaint with the UN against Pakistan for having direct talks with the Taliban without former's permission which is in clear violation of sovereignty of the landlocked country<sup>63</sup>.

### TRUMP'S AFGHANISTAN STRATEGY

Afghanistan's security more or less depends on the policies at the domestic, regional and international level. Since 2003/2004, different governments in Afghanistan have been struggling to improve the security situation, but it has suffered losses due to policy changes at the regional and international level, especially by Pakistan and the US. It has been observed

that the international troops have failed in their mission to bring peace, security and stability in Afghanistan.

Within a few months, the US policy towards Afghanistan was overturned and President Obama's promises did not last long as the 2016-2017 elections resulted in the election of a big businessman Donald J. Trump as the new President of the US. During the election campaign, Trump announced to bring all American troops back from Afghanistan. But suddenly, he changed his policy after becoming the President and declared to send some more troops to Kabul. Then, on 13 April 2017, the US military dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb, it has ever used in combat, and hit the IS groups hiding in east Afghanistan that killed 96 fighters of the IS<sup>64</sup>.

On 21 August 2017, President Donald Trump announced his Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia. He laid down three main priorities in Afghanistan: first, the US is seeking honorable and enduring outcome of the huge sacrifices that have been made; second, the US approach in Afghanistan would be conditioned-based and not time-based like the former government did that left the vacuum to be filled by the terrorists as happened before September 11, 2001. The consequences of the rapid withdrawal are predictable and unacceptable, and at the same time, enemy also knows the plans in advance and acts accordingly. And finally, the security threats in Afghanistan are immense and Pakistan is harboring safe havens for the terrorists and the resurgence of the terrorists, that threatens America, must be stopped<sup>65</sup>. Trump said that Afghanistan has been fighting the same terrorists who threaten America. He further recollected that the fundamental pillar of the US strategy is to integrate all instruments of American power- diplomatic, economic and military- to achieve a successful outcome. President Trump declared that America is there not for nation-building or construct democracy and Afghan people would take ownership of their future and govern their society. He urged the NATO allies and global partners to support the strategy with additional troops and funding. President Ghani gave a favorable response to Trump's new strategy by calling it a 'regional approach' to deal with the Taliban by inviting Pakistan for a comprehensive dialogue, which is the sanctuary for terrorists and helping the Taliban operating in Afghanistan. American Generals on the field estimated some 4,000 additional US troops with artillery and air support to help the ANDSF to drive back the Taliban and regain the lost territories like Sangin and Lashkargah in Helmand Province and other areas in Kunduz<sup>66</sup>. Besides, President Trump also urged India,

an old friend of Afghanistan, to increase its role in Afghanistan. The number of the US forces in Afghanistan would rise to 14,000 more than the number of troops under Obama which was 12,000<sup>67</sup>.

On the contrary, the Taliban spokesperson Zabiullah Mijahid warned President Trump stating that the US should not waste its troops' lives and Afghanistan would become a 'graveyard'<sup>68</sup>. The UNAMA (2017) estimated that between January 1 and June 30, 2017 the Taliban killed at least 1,662 civilians<sup>69</sup>. The US government watchdog stressed the need to bring changes in the training of the Afghan security forces or billions of dollars would go waste without any outcome. The US government estimated that the government forces in Afghanistan control less than 60 per cent of the area in the country and other parts are either contested or controlled by the insurgents<sup>70</sup>. In order to improve the Afghan Air Force, the US delivered, in September 2017, first of its four US made UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to Afghanistan to replace the aged Russian-made Mi-17 helicopters<sup>71</sup>. However, even after one year of the announcement of his Afghanistan Strategy, Trump administration has not been able to settle the Taliban question and persuade Pakistan to discontinue its support for the terrorists. In September 2018, Washington nominated former US Ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad as its 'special advisor' for reconciliation efforts between Kabul and the Taliban<sup>72</sup>. Later, the US claimed that its officials had secret peace talks with the Taliban in Qatar, which was not taken positively by Kabul. However, the situation on the ground also revealed a different story<sup>73</sup>. The IS and other militant groups continued their attacks in Afghanistan that claimed hundreds of lives.

The US and Taliban have held another round of peace talks in Qatar on 25 February 2019<sup>74</sup>. The US sent its special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad to talk with Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, new appointed political chief of the Taliban, and set the framework for the peace process in Afghanistan in order to end the 17-year prolonged war. The US demanded that the Taliban would not allow any alien insurgent groups to use their soil, such as Al Qaeda as in the past. The Taliban accepted Washington's demand on the condition that all international troops should completely withdraw from Afghanistan<sup>75</sup>. However, the Taliban has not accepted to hold any direct talks with Afghanistan government<sup>76</sup>. Therefore, even after seventeen years of struggle of the international forces against the Taliban, the situation in Afghanistan does not seem stable and the US has failed to persuade Pakistan to contribute to the peace efforts.

### REGIONAL THREATS TO AFGHANISTAN'S SECURITY

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Afghanistan has two messages to its neighbors: first, it wants equal partnership, and second, it wants to be the catalyst for regional cooperation<sup>77</sup>. In December 2002, Afghanistan signed the 'Kabul Declaration on Good Neighborly Relations' in which Afghanistan and its neighbors committed to 'constructive and supportive bi-lateral relationships based on the principles of territorial integrity, mutual respect, friendly relations, cooperation and non-interference in the internal affairs of one another'<sup>78</sup>. Though all six neighbors of Afghanistan play different roles in its security, but it has been facing trouble with some of its neighbors, mainly Pakistan, for a long time.

#### **Pakistan**

Rivalry with Pakistan had started since the creation of Durand Line in 1893 between Afghanistan and Pakistan that divided ethnic Pashtun and Baluch communities<sup>79</sup>. Pakistan's policy in Afghanistan is centered on the three main issues: first, to control Afghanistan by weakening it with the help of the Taliban and other terrorist groups; second, to contain Afghanistan from making any dialogue with the Pashtuns in Pakistan who are demanding *Pashtunistan*, a separate Pashtun region from Pakistan; and finally, to attack and keep an eye on its long time enemy India, which is a very close friend of Afghanistan<sup>80</sup>. Since the Soviet withdrawal, Pakistan, which has been using *Mujahideen* to fight against India, in Indian Kashmir, became a 'foot hold' for several terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, *Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan*, *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* and many more<sup>81</sup>. Pakistan has been providing shelter, training, rebuilding and launching the Taliban to attack against the US/NATO forces in Afghanistan. At the same time, Pakistan pretends to fight the terrorist groups and find the solution by peace negotiations with the Taliban<sup>82</sup>. Pakistan has also been dealing with large number of Afghan refugees even earlier than the Taliban rule in 1996, which is another source of tension between the two countries<sup>83</sup>. Pakistan has also been disrupting and blocking the only trade route between Afghanistan and India.

Recently, after declaring his Afghanistan strategy, the US President Trump invited India to expand its role in Afghanistan and invited Pakistan to have comprehensive dialogue. However, Pakistan sees India's role in Afghanistan with suspicion. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan have tried to

bridge their differences after international pressure, but without any result. The major shift came in both countries' relations after Pakistan elected its new Prime Minister Imran Khan on 18 August 2018. He promised to cooperate with the new US President Donald Trump to achieve a political settlement with the Taliban in order to bring peace and security in Afghanistan<sup>84</sup>. But, the period of detente between Afghanistan and Pakistan was short lived as the latter accused the former for harbouring anti-Pakistan insurgents and overflowing Afghan refugees into its territory<sup>85</sup>. Recently, Kabul filed a complaint with the UN against Islamabad for offering a direct dialogue with the Taliban which is the clear violation of the sovereignty of Afghanistan. After 14 February 2019 terrorist attack at Pulwama in Kashmir by Pakistan and India's response thereafter, Pakistan warned Afghanistan against its support to Delhi as it could affect the ongoing peace processes in Kabul. Pakistan also banned Afghan, Indian and other international flights from using its air space<sup>86</sup>, which has caused a lot of distress to movement of people from Afghanistan.

### **Iran**

Iran has been trying to influence Afghanistan through government partnerships, bilateral trade, cultural and religious ties mainly to keep the Shi'a community safe and also to protect its economic interests<sup>87</sup>. Historically, there was a war and rivalry between the two countries during the Empires<sup>88</sup>. Later, Iran supported the Taliban and Haqqani Network in Afghanistan which brought instability in the country, but gradually, both countries are trying to improve their relations. Through the Chabahar Port agreement in 2016 both countries are focusing on mutually beneficial economic cooperation, which is a big opportunity for Afghanistan to make an alternative trade route bypassing Pakistan<sup>89</sup>. Iran can thus play a significant role in the stability and development of Afghanistan.

Iran has had to deal with the Afghan refugee problem since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Iran has also been receiving migrants from Afghanistan due to unemployment there. Besides, there is the problem of trafficking of Afghan opium to Iran en route to Western markets<sup>90</sup>. However, Iran has always been fearful of the US military presence in Afghanistan as it poses security threat to Iran which was clearly and openly expressed by President Rouhani and the former President Ahmedinejad<sup>91</sup>. In April 2015, bilateral relations were discussed between Iran and Afghanistan during the visit of high-level Afghan delegation to Tehran.<sup>92</sup> Recently, due to US sanctions on Iran in March 2018,

unemployment has reached a record level which resulted in pushing lots of refugees back to Afghanistan. This has weakened the relations between Kabul and Tehran. However, the growing terrorist activities in Iran organised from Pakistan, have brought Tehran and Kabul closer for the common cause. In January 2019, the high-level delegation from Tehran tried to influence the Taliban, in the belief that Afghanistan's security problem would not be possible without the role of the Taliban in governance<sup>93</sup>.

### **China**

China's main interest in Afghanistan is economic and security due to growing terrorist activities in its western province Xinjiang<sup>94</sup>. Another issue is the drug smuggling from Afghanistan through Central Asia to western China<sup>95</sup>. China is deeply interested in the mineral resources in Afghanistan. In 2007, China's state-owned company, China Metallurgical Group Corporation, got the contract of 30 years for the Aynak copper mine (where China already invested over \$3.4 billion) in Logar province, south of Kabul. China has also been providing training to Afghan security forces in mine clearance<sup>96</sup>. Afghanistan and international actors believe that China can play a significant role as a mediator between Pakistan and Afghanistan for stability in Kabul. China has never blamed Pakistan for any negative activity in Afghanistan. Instead, it blocks any sanctions against Pakistan by the UN<sup>97</sup>. China only puts pressure on Pakistan to take action against Uyghur terrorists in order to maintain its own security<sup>98</sup>.

Surprisingly, China was considering to include Afghanistan in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and in June 2011, during the 10<sup>th</sup> SCO Summit in Astana, Russia called for more integration of Afghanistan into the SCO<sup>99</sup>. However, in December 2017, China, which has its own economic interests in Afghanistan and Pakistan, hosted a trilateral meeting with the foreign ministers of both countries to discuss regional issues. Three countries also agreed to work together to curb terrorism which is also linked to China's security in Xinjiang province. Afghanistan also needs China's assistance for putting pressure on its close ally Pakistan to assist reconciliation efforts and eliminate insurgent sanctuaries<sup>100</sup>.

### **Central Asian Republics**

The Central Asian Republics (CARs)- Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan share their border and historical-cultural relations with

Afghanistan. They are concerned about Afghanistan's stability due to its regional implications. Due to their turbulent history, large number of Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmen have settled in Afghanistan, and constitute about 40 per cent population of the country<sup>101</sup>. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and independence of the CARs, Saudi Arabia took advantage of the power vacuum and spread Wahabi Islam there which gave rise to Islamic political parties and extremist organizations like *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU)<sup>102</sup>. The CARs have been facing challenges of drug trafficking and terrorism from Afghanistan. In order to maintain their security, CARs supported the US 'war on terror'. Uzbekistan provided base for the US operations. Uzbekistan participated in construction efforts, restored power supply and constructed 11 bridges between Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul<sup>103</sup>. Tajikistan has also been facing the problem of narcotics trafficking and refugees from Afghanistan. Turkmenistan another important neighbouring country of Afghanistan, also faces opium smuggling. Afghanistan is looking forward to Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline to improve its economy through this project that would supply 90 million cubic meters natural gas from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India<sup>104</sup>.

The CARs have been skeptical about the NATO's counter-insurgency strategy in Afghanistan with 3Rs- reconciliation, reintegration and reconstruction<sup>105</sup>. The CARs feared that the 3Rs might result in power sharing with the Taliban which is a threat to their security. There are also some water disputes between Afghanistan and the CARs, as Afghanistan is dependent on the Pyanj river, flowing along the Tajik-Afghan border<sup>106</sup>. Russia is having the same fears of drug trafficking and terrorism from Afghanistan. Both Afghanistan and the CARs being landlocked and having difficult terrain, have common challenges for their economic development and security<sup>107</sup>.

### INDIA-AFGHANISTAN: SECURITY CHALLENGES

Though India does not share direct border with Afghanistan, it has significant influence over the country. India is a very old and true friend of Afghanistan and has provided great help in its reconstruction and development after the fall of the Taliban<sup>108</sup>. So far, India has provided \$3 billion aid to Afghanistan, and has constructed the Parliament building, schools, dams and roads across the country. However, India faces several challenges which have been preventing the progress of major development

projects in Afghanistan: such as to ensure the sovereignty and integrity of Afghanistan by engaging all ethnic groups; to prevent destruction of the political transition by reinforcing the efforts made in 'Istanbul Process' of November 2011, the 'Heart of Asia Conference' of June 2012 in Islamabad and the follow up decisions of the 'Kazakhstan Conference' in 2013, contain the IS and other militant groups which disrupt the political system in Afghanistan; integrate Afghanistan with the neighboring countries and important regional players; and prevent the Taliban from taking power again by using all the political and diplomatic means<sup>109</sup>.

The main problem India has been countering in Afghanistan is that Pakistan sponsored terrorist groups are continuously targeting Indians and destroying any construction projects done by India. Pakistan trains the terrorists to fight against India in Kashmir. According to a leaked US report, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Pakistan helped Haqqani group to attack the Indian Embassy in Kabul<sup>110</sup>. Pakistan has been blocking the only trade route between Afghanistan and India via Lahore. Getting frustrated of continued Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, the US has asked India to expand its role in Afghanistan and curb terrorism. India encourages all the peace and reconciliation efforts which are inclusive and Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled<sup>111</sup>. At the same time, Afghanistan also shows its full support to India against any terrorist activity in Kashmir and other parts of the region from Pakistan's side.

### CONCLUSION

Threat to security is and will remain the major issue of concern in Afghanistan for the government in Kabul, international actors and the regional players. Combined efforts or an integrated approach at the domestic, regional and international level are the only solution to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan. The bottom-up approach of the involvement of the local or national ownership will help bring stability in the country as the participation of the people and civil society helps to make them understand the importance of democracy and market economy. Besides, regional approach will assist in bringing peace and security in Afghanistan and the whole region. The important regional players can have much influence on the country due to their shared history, ideology, and culture and common challenges. By keeping their self-interest aside, these influential regional players should adopt the policy of 'stable thy neighbor' instead of 'beggar thy neighbor'.

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## PASHTUNISTAN FACTOR IN PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS

PRAVESH KUMAR GUPTA

Pakistan and Afghanistan being the direct neighbours share 2,430 km.<sup>1</sup> of disputed border formally known as Durand Line. Regardless of common geography, ethnicity and religious faith, Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan have never been cordial. Emergence of Pakistan was based on Islamic ideology revolving around the concept of Muslim 'Ummah'<sup>2</sup> and it was intended to be a symbol of universal Islamic solidarity to the whole world. Yet Afghanistan was the only state to vote against Pakistan's membership of the United Nations on 30 September 1947.<sup>3</sup> The Afghan delegate, Hussain Aziz stated in the UN General Assembly, "we cannot recognize the North Western Frontier as part of Pakistan so long as people of North West Frontier have not been given an opportunity free from any kind of influence - and I repeat, free from any kind of influence to determine for themselves whether they wish to be independent or to become a part of Pakistan"<sup>4</sup> Both countries are unequal in economic status and different in their ethnic composition as well as in constitutional structure. Pakistan likes to stress its obligations to the Afghan people for the sake of faith and sharing historical background, but the relationship between the two countries has never been pleasant not just because they are immediate neighbours and share a conflicting border but also due to their adherence to different political ideology<sup>5</sup>.

The idea of Pashtunistan is not new but it can be traced back to the association of Pathans (or Pashtuns) with the glorious empire of Ahmad Shah Durrani, a well-known Pathan king, who gained control over the entire area spread across Persia to Delhi during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. By 1765 AD, he established a strong kingdom of Afghanistan including present NWFP and Baluchistan. Although, his empire could not survive for long but its memory remains in popular Afghan history and this has provided



Source: <https://outofcentralasianow.wordpress.com/category/pashtunistan/page/2/>

the legacy for those advocating Pashtunistan. The origin of this issue can also be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Russian rivalry.<sup>6</sup>

With the demise of Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1773 AD, Afghanistan witnessed a period of chaos and internal strife among the ruling elites in order to secure their positions as the leader of their tribal groups. Simultaneously, this region became very important strategically to the British because they could use Afghanistan as a buffer zone between Tsarist Russia and north-western India. However, north western India was then ruled by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and in 1837 AD he defeated the Afghan ruler Dost Muhammad, incorporating part of the eastern territory of Afghanistan into his kingdom. In 1839 AD, death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and end of his reign paved the way for the British to come into direct contact with Afghanistan. Fearful of the Russian expansion south of the Amu Darya, the British wanted to make Afghanistan their protectorate to secure their Indian territories. By now indistinct boundary line between Afghanistan and British India had become the central point of concern for the British. Finally, it was decided to demarcate the boundary line between Afghanistan and British India in 1893 when Afghanistan was left with no option but to accept the decision of Sir Mortimer Durand who headed the British commission known as Durand commission.<sup>7</sup> During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the British imperial interests set the stage for the Great Game. Afghanistan had then become socio-politically vulnerable and it became a puppet of the British for safeguarding their imperialist

policies. The area lying between Pakistan and Afghanistan which is mainly inhabited by the Pashtun population, was the centre of Great Game.<sup>8</sup>

In 1837, Governor General of India Lord Auckland sent Alexander Burnes to Afghanistan with an intention to investigate the possibilities of extending trade and economic relations with Kabul and Central Asia. However the main reason behind this move was to convince the Afghan Emir Dost Muhammad to accept the friendship of the British and also to treat them as the prime ally of Afghanistan in the event of external invasion. But Dost Muhammad Khan had rather different objectives. He asked for the British help to get back Peshawar which was occupied by the Sikhs in 1834. Burnes tried to convince Auckland to consider the objectives of Dost Muhammad but he rejected his advice and signed a tripartite treaty with Shah Shuja and Ranjit Singh for the restoration of Shah Shuja as the king of Afghanistan. Auckland wanted someone friendly to the British on the throne of Kabul who could easily stop the Russian expansion in Central Asia. Therefore, he agreed to support the exiled Afghan King Shah Shuja.<sup>9</sup> The British invasion of Afghanistan in 1839 turned into first Anglo-Afghan war which lasted till 1842 and it proved to be disastrous for the British as a large number of their soldiers were killed, forcing the British to retreat.

British anxiety over the Russian expansion during the 19<sup>th</sup> century seemed to be coming into reality when Tsarist Russia reached the border of Afghanistan by 1876 advancing through the Central Asian Khanates. It was for the first time in the history of Russian imperialism that they controlled all the territories north of the Oxus River, which determines the northern border of Afghanistan. During the 1870s, the Afghan ruler Sher Ali Khan of Barakzai dynasty and son of Dost Muhammad Khan was working towards constructing cordial relations with Tsarist Russia that prompted the British to launch the second Anglo-Afghan War in 1878.

During the summer of 1878, Tsarist Russia sent an uninvited Mission to Kabul in order to secure the friendship of Afghanistan due to its apprehension of British imperialist expansion in the region. Sher Ali Khan received the Russian Mission in Kabul. This mission had reached Kabul on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1878 and after a few days the British demanded that the Afghan ruler had to accept their mission too. The situation turned out to be complicated for Sher Ali and he decided that he would not receive any British Mission in Kabul and asked the British government to stop it if it was already dispatched. The then British Viceroy in India, Lord Lytton considered it as a trick of Sher Ali and ordered a British Mission to leave

for Kabul on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1878. He had taken this decision with more of anguish and prejudice towards Russia than Afghanistan. However, the British Mission was turned back as it moved towards the eastern access of the Khyber Pass. This event led to the second Anglo-Afghan war of 1878 which lasted till 1880.<sup>10</sup>

The second Anglo Afghan War marked the height of the Great Game and it put Afghanistan at the centre of this ideological and geopolitical encounter between the two world powers. Sher Ali was overthrown by the British and he decided to flee to Russia to seek political asylum but he died in Mazar-e-Sharif. Kabul was occupied by the British forces and they forced the son of Sher Ali, Amir Yaqub Khan to Sign the Treaty of Gandamak in 1879. According to this treaty, Afghan ruler was forced to allow the British to set an Embassy in Kabul and also to surrender some important Afghan territories to the British including most of today's tribal areas on the Pakistan side of Durand line and parts of Baluchistan. The areas which the British acquired from Afghanistan were mainly Pashtun dominated. This treaty also guaranteed British support to Afghanistan in case of external aggression (primarily by Russia and Persia). They also agreed to provide annual monetary subsidy to the Afghan ruler. This treaty is regarded as the most insulting one in the history of Afghanistan and majority of the Afghan governments for a long time have renounced it as being signed under duress.<sup>11</sup> In 1880, the British Resident to Kabul, Sir Cavagnari along with some British soldiers was murdered by the Afghan Army of Herat at Bala Hisar fort. Therefore, Lord Lytton dethroned Yaqub Ali Khan and he was exiled to India and Amir Abdur Rahman was appointed as the Amir of Kabul on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1880.<sup>12</sup>

Subsequently, new means of controlling the territories acquired by the British after the second Anglo-Afghan War were introduced. They adopted a policy to demarcate legal and political boundaries for various ethnically dominated region such as Pashtun and Baloch in Afghanistan with special concern for the territory bordering the British Indian territory. Afghanistan at that time was politically divided and it was essential for the British to take care of this situation for their geo-political gains. Therefore, they appointed Amir Abdur Rehman who vehemently suppressed dissent and ruled for almost two decades. He is considered to be the founder of the modernisation process in Afghanistan. The British domination in Afghanistan increased after the second Anglo-Afghan War with the appointment of British resident in Kabul and it also strengthened the north-western borderlands of British India.<sup>13</sup>

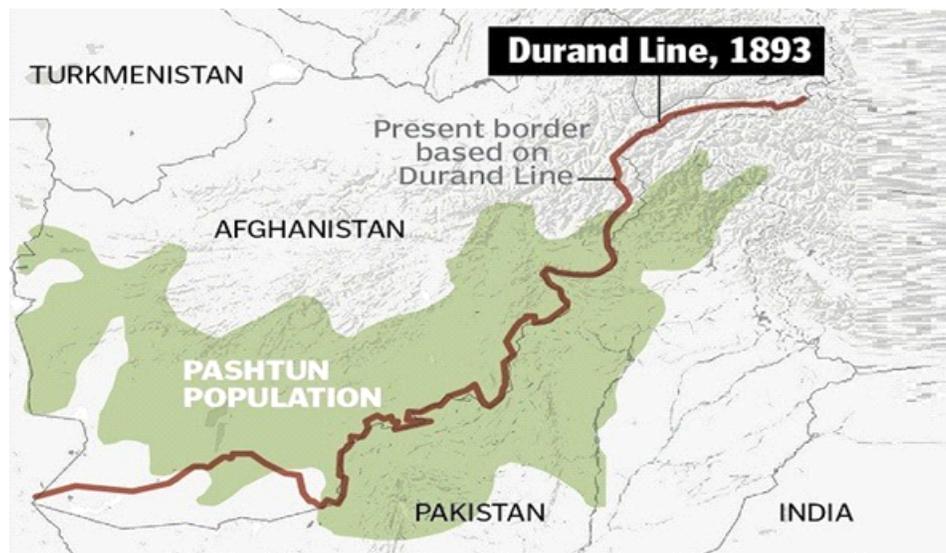
Afghanistan was considered as the Buffer State between Russian Turkestan and British India. The imperial policies of both powers created issues at times due to the unclear boundary lines. The Punjeh Crisis in 1885 between Russia and Afghanistan made it necessary for the Afghan ruler to demarcate its northern border with Russian Central Asia. A Joint Boundary Commission was formed in July 1886 to set out the border demarcation between Russia and Afghanistan. This Commission completed its work in June 1888 and in the same month final border between the two countries was confirmed. After settling its northern boundary with Russia, Amir Abdul Rahman wanted to define its southern and eastern border with British India. Therefore, in October 1888, he requested for a British mission in Afghanistan for border demarcation but without any response. Later in 1893, he again tried to insist upon the British government to send a mission to Kabul for border demarcation and this time a mission under the leadership of Sir Mortimer Durand came to Afghanistan. After a long negotiation process, an agreement known as Durand Line Agreement was signed on 12 November 1893 regarding the border demarcation between Afghanistan and British India. This international boundary came to be known as Durand Line in the name of Sir Mortimer Durand, the then Foreign Secretary of British India.<sup>14</sup>

### DURAND LINE

The geopolitical rivalry between Russia and British India during the 19<sup>th</sup> led to the formation of Durand Line. Whereas Russia desired to confine the British power within India and also in Europe, the British wanted Russian expansion limited to Central Asia only. Afghanistan was declared as buffer zone between the two great powers.<sup>15</sup> Scholars have criticized the Durand Line by stating that "The Durand Line divided the Pakhtun tribes living in the area and gave the British control over what would later become the Northwest Frontier Province (presently known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Baluchistan".<sup>16</sup> In 1901, the then Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon established the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) as the north western province of India with Durand Line as its border with Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup>

With the passage of time, Durand agreement of 1893 was ratified thrice by Afghan rulers. Amir Abdur Rahman during his reign was unable to procure any change in this agreement and in 1905 his son Habibullah Khan accepted this agreement signed by his father. In 1919, Ammanullah

Khan was appointed as the Emir after his father Habibulah's murder during a hunting trip. He tried to get back the eastern territories of Afghanistan from the British by launching an attack on the frontier region with the help of tribal population of the region. However, the British suppressed this attempt and Afghan ruler requested for peace agreement. Then a peace treaty named as the Treaty of Rawalpindi was signed in 1919 and it was ratified in 1921. Both these treaties confirmed the validity of the Durand Agreement by the Afghan rulers. In 1930, during the reign of Nadir Shah, the successor of Amanullah Khan, the 1921 agreement was reaffirmed by exchanging letters between the Afghan Minister in London and the British Secretary of State.<sup>18</sup> The demarcation of the Durand Line between Afghanistan and British India restricted the control over their respective territories. However, Afghan rulers never abided by the non-interference clause of this agreement and they kept on asserting their influence over the Pashtun population living on the British side of the Durand Line by sending their representatives.<sup>19</sup> The Durand Line has become a complex issue in Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan—the successor state of British India, ever since its creation in 1947. Several objections have been raised by the people and different Afghan governments dominated by Pashtuns regarding the legality of Durand Line.<sup>20</sup>



Source: Pashtun Times

Afghanistan condemned the referendum in NWFP by stating that

the Pashtun dominated areas of Pakistan should have been given additional options of joining Afghanistan or declaring itself independent rather than only opting between joining India or Pakistan. Afghanistan further refused to abide by any treaty with the British including Durand Line as the obligations expired with the British leaving India. Pakistan being the successor state to British India could not legally assert Durand Line as a legal boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan, because as Afghanistan argued, it was signed under pressure exerted by the British government. Since the birth of Pakistan, all Afghan governments have refused to accept the Durand Agreement which soured bilateral relations between the two countries for almost six decades. However, Pakistan has always considered Durand Line as legal international boundary between two countries. It takes the stand that international law on border demarcation provides for the inheritance of all agreements signed between Afghanistan and the British, by Pakistan.<sup>21</sup>

The Pashtuns have had great impact on the social and political spheres of Afghanistan since long time as a dominant ethnic social group. They were also considered to be major ethnic group in NWFP during the British rule. "The Pashtunistan issue was raised by the followers of Indian National Congress, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother Dr Khan Saheb in opposition to the creation of Pakistan".<sup>22</sup> Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, a Pashtun himself and also known as Frontier Gandhi, advocated the demand for independent Pashtunistan. He was a congress leader very close to Mahatma Gandhi who opposed the partition of India in 1947. When the Muslim League and British government succeeded in dividing India into two parts, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan raised the demand of Pashtunistan as an independent state. He was against the merger of Pashtuns of NWFP into Pakistan. He spent most of his life in prison for being the voice of Pashtuns after Pakistan came into existence.<sup>23</sup>

The sense of belonging among the Pashtun population on both sides of the Durand Line emerged in NWFP in 1930s when a protest was violently handled by the British killing many people in Peshawar. An Afghan *Jirga* led by Khan Abdur Gaffar Khan was held and it came to be known as *Khudai Khidmatgars* (Servants of God). In the general election of 1937 and 1946 in NWFP, this organisation fought with the support of Indian National Congress and after winning the election, they formed their government in this province. In 1946 *Khudai Khidmatgars* left Indian National Congress (INC) as it accepted the idea of the British to hold referendum in NWFP either to join India or Pakistan. They registered their objection on this

referendum by stating that they should provide an option to the people of NWFP to establish an independent state to be known as Pashtunistan.<sup>24</sup> They did not participate in the referendum and on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1947, *Khudai Khidmatgars* and a provincial *loya jirga* of NWFP collectively passed a Resolution at Bannu demanding an independent Pashtun state named as 'Pashtunistan'. This resolution was named as 'Bannu Resolution'.<sup>25</sup> The NWFP is the only province of Pakistan which did not reflect any ethnic feature in its nomenclature in spite of major portions of this region being dominated by the ethnic Pashtuns. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and his movement Red Shirts (*Khudai Khidmatgars*) struggled hard with the British government as well as with Pakistan government to declare NWFP as an independent State named as Pashtunistan. Fighting for the rights of the Pashtuns of the region, Frontier Gandhi was imprisoned by Pakistan government and his movement got integrated into the new political regime.<sup>26</sup>

In 1949, Afghanistan National Assembly refuted all agreements concluded between Afghanistan and British India through a resolution. An Afghan *Loya Jirga* held in the same year rejected all the treaties signed with the British and supported an independent Pashtunistan. Afghanistan's demand for Pashtunistan and its continuous and strong stand on decertifying the Durand Line posed a threat to Pakistan's security and sovereignty. It was obvious to Pakistan's policy makers that any strong government led by Pashtuns in Afghanistan would accentuate the demand for Pashtunistan. Sardar Daoud was the flag bearer of the demand of Pashtunistan throughout his regime.<sup>27</sup> In 1949, there were small border clashes between the two countries. In 1950, incursions from Afghanistan side into the territory of Pakistan were reported. Afghans protested against the Pakistan embassy in Kabul and there was military mobilisation in reaction to the 'one unit'<sup>28</sup> administrative reform carried out in Pakistan in 1955. Moreover, these border tensions led to military confrontation and shutdown of border between the two countries for several years.

Troubled relations between these countries have been mainly due to the large disputed territory, because Afghanistan is not recognising Durand line as its international border with Pakistan. This stance of Afghan government has made Pakistan wary of Afghanistan which could threaten its territorial integrity. Moreover Pakistan sees a weak and unstable government in Afghanistan to be in its best interests and even significant to its survival. The disputed boundary between these two countries has paved the way for nearly every other disagreement between the two

neighbours; though it has never been explicitly discussed in the negotiations.<sup>29</sup>

Afghanistan stressed upon the fact that the original treaty establishing the Durand Line as an international border between these countries was signed under coercion. It has also claimed that this treaty was signed with a state that no longer exists. This claim was countered by Pakistan stating that the treaty signed by any colonial power would be binding upon its successor states in the context of international boundaries. The issue of Pashtunistan is the main issue of concern and dispute because it divides Pashtuns also known as Pathans as an ethno-linguistic group living on both sides of the Durand Line. This group is usually recognized by their Pashto language and its loyalty towards *Pakhtunwali* (a pre-Islamic and aboriginal religious code of honour and culture) and Islam.<sup>30</sup>

Irredentist demands of Afghanistan led Pakistan to take strong actions and it started interventionist activities to counter the border dispute and Pashtunistan issue with Afghanistan. In 1950s, being close ally of Pakistan, United States refused to provide military assistance to Afghanistan. Afghanistan decided to take the help of United States' Cold War ideological enemy-the USSR, for military training and assistance. Moreover, the transit of landlocked Afghanistan's goods through Karachi port in Pakistan was obstructed at times, which made the Afghan economy weaker and vulnerable. During this period, Afghanistan's weak economy and trade led to the removal of Prime Minister Sardar Mohammad Daoud in March 1963. He was considered to be one of the most important rulers advocating the Pashtunistan movement.<sup>31</sup>

Afghanistan's keen interest in retrieving the Pashtun dominated territories of Pakistan is motivated by the fact that these areas were once conquered and ruled by the great Afghan ruler Ahmad Shah Abdali. Therefore, in 1940s when British Indian government took the decision of leaving India and addressing the demand of Muslim League for a separate nation; the government of Afghanistan asked the British government to return the Pashtun dominated territories of NWFP to Afghanistan or to provide them a choice of becoming a separate Pashtun state. But the divide and rule strategy of British first divided India on the basis of religion and further divided Pashtuns, thus paving the way for long and troubled relations among them.<sup>32</sup>

The Referendum organised by the British for the people of the NWFP and tribal areas providing a choice to go with either Pakistan or India was severely opposed by the *Khudai Khitmatgars* and its founder Khan

Abdul Gaffar Khan. The main reason behind this resistance was that people of the region were not given a choice of self determination. Leaders of *Khudai Khidmatgars* and major portion of population from the tribal areas previously administered by the British boycotted the referendum. This referendum was limited to the specific areas wanting to join Pakistan.<sup>33</sup> This referendum bothered Afghanistan as it was considered as a unilateral step taken without its consent. It further stated that because a large number of Pashtun population refused to vote, therefore this referendum did not fulfil the requirement for self determination. Moreover, Kabul argued that Pakistan not being the successor state to the British, was a new country born out of British India, so all treaties and rights enjoyed by British India could not be assumed by Pakistan. Afghanistan continued its claim on Pashtunistan irrespective of whoever was in power at different times. Zahir Shah, Sardar Daoud and even the successive communist leaders always maintained their old position on Pashtunistan issue. This issue had become the main source of conflict with Pakistan with varying degrees of confrontation over time. In 1980s, Pakistan trained *Mujahideen* entered into Afghanistan to fight against the Soviet regime. At one point, the first communist leader of Afghanistan, Noor Muhammad Taraki suggested to General Zia ul-Haq that if Pakistan would stop helping the *Mujahideen*, then Afghanistan would consider the Durand Line as international border between the two countries. Pakistan's stance was that it already recognized Durand Line as a legal and internationally recognised border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup>

Pashtunistan issue triggered tensions between the two countries from the initial days of Pakistan coming into existence and it further got aggravated with time. A number of cross-border raids by Afghan troops were reported in the years 1949 and 1950. These border incidents resulted into clashes between Afghan and Pakistan border security forces. These events proved to be disastrous for the people dwelling on the both sides of the border. In 1955 when Pakistan introduced the 'one unit' plan and decided to bring NWPF region into West Pakistan, Afghanistan condemned this move and their relations further deteriorated. Pakistan embassy in Kabul was attacked by the Afghan protesters and Pakistan's flag was pulled off; Pakistan's consulates at Jalalabad and Kandhar were also attacked and Pakistan had to face trouble in bringing its employees back to the country. As a consequence, relations between the two countries were temporarily suspended. Turkey as a third party intervened to normalize relations between the two countries<sup>35</sup>.

In the following year, reciprocal visits of leaders from both countries resulted into the improvement of bilateral relations. Prime Minister Suhrawardy and President Iskander Mirza of Pakistan visited Afghanistan in 1956 and 1957 respectively. As a diplomatic gesture Sardar Daoud Khan, the then Prime Minister of Afghanistan visited Pakistan in 1956 and in 1958 a visit of Afghan king Zahir Shah to Pakistan took place. These visits somehow resulted in the signing of trade and transit agreement between them which facilitated the transit of Afghan goods through Karachi port. However, these bilateral visits did not affect much their stand on the issue of Pashtunistan. In 1958 the regime changed in Pakistan and Ayub Khan became the President which further deteriorated the relationship. In 1960 and 1961 border clashes between the two sides took place along with the harassment of Pakistani consular officials which compelled Pakistan to close down its consulates in Afghanistan. Pakistan also requested Afghan government to do the same in Pakistan. The repercussion of this decision was breaking of diplomatic relations and closing the Pak-Afghan border by Afghanistan. The fluctuation of diplomatic ties resulted in economic and trade deprivation of Afghanistan and it affected the Afghan population at large. The Cold War period witnessed United States supporting Pakistan arms and military assistance which led to Afghanistan seeking support of Soviet Union.<sup>36</sup> In 1979, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan considerably and directly affected Pakistan. This invasion forced Pakistan to think about the disturbing elements that were going to challenge its strategic setting in the region. In this aggravating situation, Pakistan encountered a number of security threats. For Pakistan, its internal security scenario, India seeking strategic depth in Afghanistan and threat from Afghanistan have been the main concerns.<sup>37</sup>

### PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS

Pakistan - Afghanistan relations have witnessed several ups and downs since 1947, just after the partition of India and emergence of Pakistan as a separate country. In 1947 both the Muslim countries established relationships which could not last for long and issues related to Durand Line severely affected them. Again in 1979, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and in 1990s the rise of Taliban regime in Afghanistan deteriorated their bilateral relationship.<sup>38</sup> Border issue along with trade and transit of Afghan goods through Pakistan territory are some serious issues affecting the relations between the two countries. External forces

have also played significant role in determining the relationship of these countries with each other. For example the Soviet invasion of 1979 and Cold War era shaped their relationships as political adversaries. Pakistan has always tried to dominate Afghanistan with its military might rather than using diplomacy as a tool to resolve the bilateral issues. Afghanistan as a land locked country not only needs to trade through Pakistan but it also provides access to Pakistan to the potential markets of energy rich Central Asian countries through its Wakhan Corridor.<sup>39</sup> The concept of security has been the main concern for both countries. Pakistan's apprehensions regarding the demand of Pashtunistan and political instability in Afghanistan have been the main factor in Pakistan's attitude towards its immediate neighbour. However, Afghanistan has been constant in its irredentist claims on Pakistan's NWFP due to its nationalistic approach for its Pashtun population.

The ethnic and geographic features of the border areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan are the main reason for their respective claims in the region since long time. Pashtuns being the majority in Afghanistan have deep impact on its socio-political environment in NWFP which is considered both demographically and politically very important region for the sovereignty of Pakistan.<sup>40</sup> The rigid stand of both countries regarding the validity of Durand Line can be seen through the prism of Pashtun nationalism as Afghanistan's claim on Pashtun dominated territories of Pakistan is driven by its ethno-nationalistic approach. On the other hand Pakistan's insecurity arises from the same phenomenon. The Pashtun population on both sides of the Durand Line has encountered the modernisation process, which changed their cultural understanding from tribal to modern Pashtun nationalistic ideology. This sense of ethnic belongingness was limited to the urban areas while the tribal region still fought for the existence of their specific group.<sup>41</sup>

Pashtun nationalism has been the driving force behind the advocacy of an independent Pashtunistan by Afghanistan just after the creation of Pakistan. This is clearly visible in its nomenclature, as 'Pashtunistan' means the 'land of Pashtuns'. Afghan government wanted that the people of Pakistan's north western province should have also been given an option either to join Afghanistan or to become independent. Pashtunistan, that Afghanistan wanted to be created, geographically includes half of West Pakistan and also parts of Baluchistan. These demands were termed as irredentist by Pakistan while Afghanistan considered it necessary for the Pashtun national independence. Some scholars opine that if there would

have been an independent Pashtunistan, it would not have survived being a weak and unprotected state. Another possibility would have been the merger of Pashtunistan within Afghanistan. One of the main reasons behind Afghanistan's claims over Pashtun and Baloch territories of Pakistan is that it would have solved its major strategic weakness of being the landlocked state. Incorporation of Baloch dominated areas into Afghanistan would have given it access to the Arabian Sea. In fact, several border skirmishes and closure of border by Pakistan have adversely affected trade and economy of Afghanistan.<sup>42</sup>

### **PASHTUNISTAN FACTOR IN PAK POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN**

In early 1920s Amanullah Khan's effort to modernise Afghanistan failed and resulted into a civil war following which Inayatullah Khan and Habibullah Kalakani ruled Afghanistan until Nadir Shah (father of King Zahir Shah) seized power with the British support and declared himself the ruler of Afghanistan in 1929. He could not rule for long and he was assassinated in 1933 by a student of Amaniah School in Kabul. This assassination was motivated by the nationalist movement of Afghanistan struggling to get back the lost Afghan territory across the Durand Line. Following the death of Nadir Shah, his 19 year old son took over as the ruler of Afghanistan and remained in power till 1973. He was overthrown by his cousin and brother in law, Sardar Daoud Khan who remained the Prime Minister of Afghanistan from 1953-63.

Sardar Daoud Khan had a vision to modernise Afghanistan and was dedicated to recover the lost Afghan territory during the British domination over Afghanistan. During his tenure as Prime Minister from 1953-63, he was fully devoted to the Pashtunistan issue. At this time, the US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles who was determined to contain the Soviet Union in Asia made Pakistan its ally. However, Pakistan's relation with US was strong and Daoud Khan's constant support to the issue of Pashtunistan strained the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan's foreign policy was inclined toward Western block and in order to get military and political support, Pakistan gained membership of military alliances such as SEATO (South East Asian Treaty Organisation) and CENTO (Centre Treaty Organisation also known as Baghdad Pact or Middle East Treaty Organisation) in 1954 under US patronage. Pakistan by joining these alliances mainly aimed at getting leverage against India. Daoud Khan chose to be neutral in the ideological war between the United

States and Soviet Union. He had sought military and financial support from the US, which turned down his requests as it had already chosen Pakistan as its ally. Then Daoud turned towards USSR for the supply of arms and also financial assistance.<sup>43</sup>

Russia's military and financial help to Afghanistan increased its dependence on the former Soviet Union. During the period between 1953 and 1978, Soviet Union invested almost 2.5 billion dollars in military and economic assistance to Afghanistan. Moreover, a number of Afghan soldiers were trained in Soviet Union in this period and these Afghan soldiers were responsible for the coup of 1973 and 1978 which culminated in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.<sup>44</sup> This period was the peak of the Cold War in this region which affected the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan and their allies. At this time, the issue of Pashtunistan was heightened by Daoud Khan. It turned into serious crisis between Pakistan and Afghanistan when in September 1960 both these countries were on the verge of a war. In 1961, Afghanistan's government closed diplomatic relations with Pakistan and border between the two sides also closed down.<sup>45</sup>

Daoud Khan was ousted by a coup in 1978 and Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) took over under the leadership of Noor Mohammad Taraki as president. A year later, Communist regime was established in Afghanistan due to inefficiency of the government in handling the rebels. Takeover of Afghanistan by Soviet Union in 1979 caused serious insecurities both in Pakistan and United States of America. Therefore, a joint action known as Operation Cyclone was launched by the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI with the support of the US Central Intelligence Agency to organize a large number of Afghan *Mujahideen* recruited mainly from the Pashtun tribes on the Pakistan side of Durand line. Simultaneously, General Zia ul Haq, the longest ruling head of Pakistan initiated aggressive Islamisation of the country and ISI backed by US at the same time planted militant jihadi groups as proxies to fight the communists in Afghanistan.<sup>46</sup>

During the Cold War period, the main reason behind Pakistan trying to attain leverage in Afghanistan was to contain India's influence there, to suppress the demand of Pashtunistan and to eject the Soviets by supporting radical groups in Afghanistan as its proxies. Some scholars opine that USA had tried Pakistani military and political regime to mend its relations with Afghanistan but Pakistan was obsessed to make Afghanistan unstable to enhance its influence against India by garnering

radical Islamist groups. Pakistan's dilemma over a stable government in Afghanistan was that it would build close relations with India and encircle Pakistan. It could provide safe haven to anti-Pakistani groups in which the supporters of Pashtunistan would cause trouble for the stability of Pakistan.<sup>47</sup>

Pashtunistan has been a prominent determinant of the foreign policy of Afghanistan. For Pakistan, it is an important issue in its foreign policy objectives in its immediate neighbourhood. However, Kashmir issue and loss of East Pakistan are more important to Pakistan than the issue of Pashtunistan. Pakistan's claims on the Afghan territory acquired by the British in 19<sup>th</sup> century were primarily stimulated by the fact that being the successor state it inherited all the rights and privileges obtained by the British. Pakistan government provided that all tribal regions of the western provinces including the Pashtun dominated areas would retain some of their tribal traditions related to their system of law and governance, but no other privileges would be granted to them. Pakistan considers that each and every matter related to the north western tribal provinces and Baluchistan comes under its own domestic affairs. Pakistan rejects Afghanistan's claims of separate homeland for Pashtun population of the Pakistan's side of Durand Line. Moreover, for Pakistan government, the Pashtuns of Pakistan who support Pashtunistan do not really want a separate homeland but want greater cultural, political and economic autonomy within Pakistan.<sup>48</sup>

Pakistan denies the fact that Pathans of Pakistan had ever been a part of Afghanistan. Moreover, these Pathans got out of the control of Afghanistan after the British occupied this region. Pakistan argues that people of this region never paid revenues to the Afghan Amir and Afghan ruler only dealt with them by luring them monetarily or by blackmailing. However, the British did not try to impose their authority over these people as it could lead them to war and geopolitical utility of Afghanistan as a buffer to contain Russian expansion would have vanished. The connection that the Pathans and Afghanistan have is basically derived from historical legacy that they equally shared.<sup>49</sup> According to Firoz Khan, demand of Pashtunistan was an irredentist movement started in Afghanistan which later reverberated on the Pakistan side of Durand line mainly organized by the 'Red Shirts' or *Khudai Khidmatgars* under the leadership of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan.<sup>50</sup>

Flagging the Pashtun question and supporting the right to national self determination for the people of NWFP, almost all Afghan rulers felt

that being in a country with Afghans as an ethnic majority they had an obligation to support the Pashtuns even across the Durand line as the international validity of Durand Line was disputed.<sup>51</sup> Most of the Afghan Governments mainly led by Pashtuns have advocated the cause. Pashtunistan issue has a very deep impact over the internal politics of Afghanistan, which makes it imperative for the ruling party to extend support on this issue. Kabul on many occasions refused to have bilateral talks with Pakistan, until the Pashtuns or Pashtunistan would be discussed. Therefore, this issue has been the bone of contention between the two states deteriorating their political, trade and economic relations.

Pakistan's foreign policy objectives in Afghanistan could only be possible through an unchallenging and supportive Afghan government which do not support the Pashtun nationalist demands and also offer strategic depth to Pakistan. This has been Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan particularly after the Soviet invasion of 1979. During this time, Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence with the support of Central Intelligence Agency of USA thoroughly supported the Afghan *Mujahideen* rebellion in order to oust Soviet forces from Afghanistan.<sup>52</sup> This period marked Pakistan's typical Afghan policy. It used Islamic insurgent groups as a bargaining tool to force Afghanistan to leave its policy of providing a support system to Pashtun separatism in Pakistan. Moreover, to further destabilise the Afghan nationalist movement in Pakistan and also to curb any future issues related to the validity of Durand Line and demand of Pashtunistan, Pakistan strengthened these Islamists in Afghanistan by supplying them with financial and military assistance.<sup>53</sup>

Pakistan's continuous support to the Afghan Taliban has been mainly directed toward exercising influence over the politics of Afghanistan. In fact, Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are responsible for creating the Taliban in Afghanistan. These countries officially recognized the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. United States through Pakistan provided monetary help to the Taliban and Pakistan for destabilising Afghanistan for its strategic benefits. However, 9/11 incident in USA proved disastrous to USA for supporting Islamic extremism. Following the end of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan with the joint efforts of US and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) forces, Pakistan has continued to assist the Taliban insurgents. This becomes clear from the existence of *Quetta Shura* in the city of Quetta in Baluchistan since 2001. Mullah Omar was one of the main leaders of this group which Pakistan considered as an asset in case Taliban again rose to power in

Afghanistan. Afghanistan's consistency on not recognising Durand Line as an international border between the two countries was primarily due to Pakistan's support to insurgents and this reflects mutual distrust between them.<sup>54</sup>

### THE TALIBAN ERA

Pashtun population of Afghanistan panicked over losing their power to Northern Alliance (consisting majority of Tajiks and Uzbeks) as they were becoming more politically dominant, which resulted in the polarisation between the Pashtuns and other ethnic groups. This provided suitable conditions for Pakistan to buttress the Taliban. Therefore, Taliban comprising young Pashtun population mainly students of Islamic *madrassas* operated by *Jamat-i-Ulema-i-Islam* of Pakistan and its leader Maulana Fazlur Rahman was successfully created. Moreover, Pakistan's interior minister Naseerullah Babar played key role in the creation of Taliban militants. Pakistan in search of strategic depth in Afghanistan, which could only be possible with a pro-Pakistan regime in Kabul, desperately involved itself with the Taliban when its policy of supporting Hikmatyar and *Mujahideen* seemed failing.<sup>55</sup> According to Barnett Rubin, "Pakistan's concerns about Pashtun territorial claims had been one of the reasons why 'old-school elements' within Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence supported the Taliban during the 1990s. He says the issue also underscores why it was in the interests of Pakistan's foreign-policy goals for *madrassas* to provide a fundamentalist Islamic education to the children of the millions of Afghan refugees who fled to Pakistan during the 1980s and 1990s"<sup>56</sup>.

Taliban have been an important factor in determining the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Centred mainly in the bordering areas of both countries, Taliban has affected their politics. Pakistan first harboured the Afghan *Mujahideen* against the Soviets in Afghanistan and later after the Soviet forces withdrawal and internal discord in the country, it helped the Taliban to become main political and military force. Pakistan garnered material and political support for the Taliban. In 2001, 9/11 changed the United States policy objectives in Asia and it declared 'War on Terror' to eradicate radical Islamist forces from Afghanistan. As a close ally of US, Pakistan did not have any other option but to support the US 'War on Terror' against the Taliban.<sup>57</sup> General Pervez Musharraf, who seized power in 1999 by a military coup in Pakistan, supported USA due

to his fears of an India- US alliance. Moreover, in lieu of providing military bases and facilitating the transport of supplies, Pakistan received billions of US dollars during the years Coalition Army fought against terrorist forces in Afghanistan. US led forces jointly fighting with Northern Alliance brought down the Taliban government in less than two months and the fleeing Taliban found refuge in the Pakistan side of the Durand line.<sup>58</sup>

Pakistan's support to the Taliban in the late 1990s was mainly due to two reasons; first they thought that Taliban would recognize the validity of the Durand Line and secondly, they would help it to undermine Pashtun nationalism in north-western Pakistan. However, this anticipation of Pakistan was shattered when Taliban did the opposite. The Taliban refused to recognize the Durand Line and also promoted Pashtun nationalism with more Islamic disposition in order to influence the Pashtuns on both sides of the Durand Line. Overthrow of the Taliban from Afghanistan also altered Pakistan's Afghan policy. Pakistan's support to the NATO forces cost it the support of many Pashtun tribal clans in Afghanistan. Moreover, when Pakistan diluted the efforts of Pashtuns of Pakistan to cross the border to fight against the Western forces, TTP (*Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan*) threatened to attack several places all over Pakistan. Thus, the objectives that ISI had in mind while bolstering the Taliban in Afghanistan proved to be disastrous for its own security and sovereignty as it aggravated Islamic radicalism in Pakistan besides in Afghanistan. In order to prevent further cross-border stimulation of Islamist extremism in the border areas of Pakistan, it thought of fencing the border between the two countries. Islamabad claimed that it was necessary to fence the border to stop drug trafficking, arms peddling and terrorist activities across the porous border.<sup>59</sup>

Pakistan's extended support to the Western forces in fighting against the extremist forces in Afghanistan caused a setback to its influence in the tribal regions of NWFP. Most of the Pashtun areas of bordering region of Pakistan and Afghanistan have come under control of TTP, after the US operations in Afghanistan. TTP promised to the people of these areas to re-establish Pashtun dominated regimes in both Afghanistan and NWFP. TTP strengthened its influence over these areas by aligning with the local cultural-political and Pashtun aspirations regarding autonomy and self governance.<sup>60</sup> Pakistan's obsession of using Afghanistan for its strategic depth against India and to neutralise the Pashtunistan movement, is now threatening its own security. Terrorist organizations which have taken shelter in Pakistan's FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Regions) started

operating from its soil against Afghanistan and Western forces. Some of them such as Al-Qaeda and Haqqani Network have become so strong that they threaten the security and stability of the region. These terrorist groups are still operational from the FATA region against Afghanistan as well as Pakistan.<sup>61</sup>

### POST-TALIBAN ERA

Although the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was removed from power in 2001 by the US led forces, it is not defeated as it still has a large number of Afghan fighters and its influence over the population of southern and eastern border regions of Afghanistan. The Taliban cadres also took refuge across the border line in Pakistan's tribal areas. In and after 2014, with the NATO forces gone out of Afghanistan, Taliban and other terrorist groups again threatened to destabilize the region. These militant groups are considered by the Western intelligence agencies to be responsible for the attacks in Afghanistan, India and USA.<sup>62</sup>

Appointment of Hamid Karzai, a Durrani Pashtun as an interim Afghan president in some way irked Pakistan as it thought that once again the issue of separate land for Pashtuns would be highlighted. In 2004 general elections of Afghanistan, Karzai was elected to be the president of the country. By 2005, Afghan Pashtuns again started to celebrate the Pashtunistan Day on 31<sup>st</sup> August of every year. In addition to this, in February 2006, President Hamid Karzai refused to accept the Durand line as international border and described it as a line of hatred because it raised a barrier between the two brothers. Many incidents of clashes between the Afghan and Pakistani troops were reported over the disputed boundary line in 2003 and anti-Pakistan slogans were raised in many Afghan cities such as Kandhar, Laghman, Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul to name some. Repeating the incident of 1950s, yet again on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2003 Pakistan Embassy at Kabul was ransacked by Afghan protesters and it escalated into wider clashes. By the year 2006, relations between the two countries further got deteriorated when Taliban gained considerable strength in Afghanistan and President Karzai condemned Pakistan for supporting and sheltering the Taliban leaders in their cities. Though, Pakistan denied all the allegations made by the Afghan President, it is quite evident from the Pak policy of destabilizing Afghanistan.<sup>63</sup>

It has been observed that Pakistan's Afghan policy was mainly Pashtun-centric ever since its origin as an Islamic state. But Pakistan

embassy in Kabul has also been cultivating non-Pashtun tribes of Afghanistan. Over the years Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan has paid several visits to northern Afghanistan (majority of which are non-Pashtun tribes such as Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras) and introduced a number of development projects there funded by Pakistan. In search of its strategic depth in the region, Pakistan seeks to gain influence over non-Pashtun tribes as well.<sup>64</sup> 2014 general elections in Afghanistan brought power into the hands of Ashraf Ghani and his government initially started cultivating good relations with Pakistan. But with Pakistan sheltering terrorists and creating instability in Afghanistan, compelled President Ghani to turn back to its old Afghan policy of caution towards Pakistan.

### PAK APPROACH TO PASHTUNISTAN

Pashtunistan is considered as a historic homeland for all the Pashtuns across the Durand Line and even after the demarcation of this arbitrary line, people from the bordering areas cross it frequently to meet their families separated by this line. Government of Pakistan always treated the demand of an independent Pashtunistan as an irrational territorial claim contesting its sovereignty.<sup>65</sup> It also claims that Durand Line is a legal boundary which was consecutively ratified by the Afghanistan government in 1905, 1919 (also known as Treaty of Rawalpindi establishing peaceful relations between the British and Afghans after ceasefire in Third Anglo-Afghan war) and in 1921<sup>66</sup> (known as Treaty of Kabul signed between Henry R. C. Dobbs, the Indian Foreign Secretary, and Mahmud Tarzi, Chief of Afghan delegation<sup>67</sup> after a long negotiation process, which declared independence of Afghanistan). The treaty of 1921 was reaffirmed by the Afghan Ambassador in London, Marshall Shah Wali Khan in 1930.<sup>68</sup> However, when Treaty of Rawalpindi was concluded, it included a clause eroding all the previous treaties. Moreover, in the treaty of 1921 it was explicitly stated under Article 14 that either party signing this treaty could denounce it by giving a prior notice of one year.<sup>69</sup> Article 14 of the 1921 treaty ratified on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1922 explains that:

"The provisions of this treaty shall come into force from the date of its signature, and shall remain in force for three years from that date. In case neither of the High Contracting Parties should have notified twelve months before the expiration of the said three years the intention to terminate it, it shall remain binding until the expiration of one year from the day on which either of the High Contracting Parties shall have denounced it. This treaty shall come into

force after the signatures of the Missions of the two Parties and the two ratified copies of this shall be exchanged in Kabul within 2 and half months after the signatures".<sup>70</sup>

A separate homeland for the Pashtuns across the Durand Line is actually denied by Pakistan on the basis of its claim that the people of the Pakistani side of Durand line were given a choice of joining either India or Pakistan in a referendum held in Peshawar in 1947 in which they voted for Pakistan. Besides, according to Pakistan, under international law, Pakistan is the legal inheritor of the NWFP, FATA (includes seven Tribal agencies and five Frontier regions) and parts of Baluchistan. With an intention to gain support of the Pashtuns of north-western region, Pakistan government in its initial days assured Pashtuns to uphold their tribal values and culture without any interference. They were encouraged to join the Pakistan military owing to their military skills. Mohammad Ali Jinnah himself had guaranteed that his government would respect all arrangements made with the tribal Pashtun population of the North West until the *Jirgas* were held in these areas. Jinnah also appealed to the people of this region to provide their support to the government so that it can build a democratic state taking care of all ethnic groups. Moreover, he was keen to have friendly relations with Afghanistan.<sup>71</sup> In this direction all the tribal agencies and frontier regions were directly ruled by the Government of Pakistan through special set of laws called 'Frontier Crimes Regulations' (FCR) till March 2017 when Government approved the merger of these regions into Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and repealed the FCR.<sup>72</sup>

The power sharing dimension in Pakistan is odd where NWFP and FATA are the least represented regions than Sindh and Punjab. Baluchistan has also been neglected by Pakistan in terms of policy approach of the government. Moreover, these regions are also deprived of the socio-economic development in comparison to Punjab and Sindh. Sindhis and Punjabis dominated the political, military and economic sector of Pakistan for a long time unlike Pakistani Pashtuns. Previously, few Pashtun leaders reached the heights of Pakistani power and politics; for example Ayub Khan who was the commander in chief of Pakistani army became second president of Pakistan. Besides him some other Pashtuns had risen to political and military positions. However, it would not compensate for the backwardness of education and socio-economic conditions of the Pashtun population of Pakistan.<sup>73</sup>

After neglecting the Pashtun ethnic groups in power and politics of Pakistan, Islamabad government turned its focus towards them in the

1960s. The government decided to reform their educational and economic status by bringing them into politics and military institutions. Considering the different ethnic and social positions of these newly employed Pashtuns into Pakistan army, government tried hard to bolster Islamisation and strengthening of Islamic solidarity. The idea was to pacify Pashtun nationalism within Pakistan by intertwining the Pashtuns of Pakistan with Islam and also to justify Pakistan's claim that being an Islamic country, Pakistan is their rightful home.<sup>74</sup> The growing presence of Pashtuns in the state institutions also affected the intensity of Pashtunistan movement in Pakistan. Leaders advocating this movement had earlier argued that they are being ruled by other ethnic group. Now, this argument became weak with the appointment of Pashtuns on various top posts in Pakistan, for example military ruler Ayub Khan and others.<sup>75</sup> To suppress the Pashtunistan issue, Pakistan has always been seeking a friendly regime in Kabul. As Savita Pandey says, "Pakistan's interest in seeing a friendly government in Afghanistan is rooted in thwarting attempts of a Pashtun secessionist movement in Pashtunistan, which might be supported by Kabul. The term Pashtunistan though coined by the Pashtuns on the Afghan side, was never clearly defined and may not have got the targeted popularity, but has been compelling enough to make the Pakistani leaders insecure".<sup>76</sup>

Though there were some internal conflicts among different Pashtun groups, but the Pashtuns have always been united politically by their cultural and ethnic values and stood together in struggle for their homeland. Pakistan's efforts of radicalizing the Pashtun areas across the Durand Line have resulted into Islamic fanaticism and growth in Pashtun nationalism which somehow added to its own security issues.<sup>77</sup>

### **PASHTUN TAHAFUZ MOVEMENT (PTM)**

*The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement* also known as Pashtun Protection Movement was started primarily by young Pashtun activists demanding an end to the atrocities by the Pakistan army and police over Pashtun population in the Tribal Areas. There have been a huge number of young Pashtuns being killed and abducted by the Pakistan authorities in the region by labelling them as terrorists working for Pakistani Taliban. This movement started with the extra judicial killing of Naqeebullah Mehsud, an aspiring model in Karachi which agitated the Pashtuns of north-western and tribal region of Pakistan. It is ironical that Pakistan Army, in order to

appease the USA's ambition of fighting terrorism in the region, have been killing Pakistani Pashtuns as they also are fearful of them being supporters of Afghanistan's Greater Pashtunistan. Therefore, PTM can be considered to be symbolically supporting the Pashtunistan issue, as it is a collective movement of Pashtuns in Pakistan supported by the Pashtun Diaspora all around the world morally and monetarily. Two significant symbols strengthening and consolidating the movement are the red ethnic cap from Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan known as *Mazari cap* and the word *Pashteen*, a pronunciation of Pashtun in Mehsud dialect and also the name of the founder of the movement Manzoor Pasheen. Men and women from Pakistan and Afghanistan are sharing their images wearing the cap to show solidarity with the PTM movement<sup>78</sup>.

The Awami National Party (ANP) and its president Asfandyar Wali Khan (grandson of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan) which has a long history of advocating rights of the Pashtuns has isolated itself from the PTM and has been cracking down on party members who have been involved with it.<sup>79</sup> The forthcoming elections in Pakistan could be the reason why ANP is not supporting PTM, but at a point when Pashtuns of all over the world are raising their voices against the Pakistani government, ANP's stance cannot be justified. Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani also extended his support to the *Pashtun Long March* by stating that Pashtuns of Pakistan required fighting hard against fundamentalism and terrorism.

## CONCLUSION

Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan have never been smooth but have been strained because of Afghanistan's ethno-nationalism and with Pakistan sabotaging the ethnic pride of Pashtuns. Demarcation of Durand Line in 1893 divided the Pashtuns of Afghanistan which later became the main issue of the foreign policy objectives of these countries. No government in Afghanistan recognized this boundary as valid till date. When the British announced the independence of India, Afghanistan at that time only registered its concern about returning the Pashtun populated regions of British India to Afghanistan as all the treaties responsible for the occupation of those regions by the British terminated with their withdrawal and new born Pakistan did not have the right to possess them. However, the British did not comply with Afghanistan's demand and allocated those regions to Pakistan. This marked the beginning of demand of a separate state for Pashtuns named as 'Pashtunistan' which Pakistan

considered as threat to its territorial integrity. While Afghanistan wholeheartedly supported Pashtunistan, it resulted into the deep troubled relations with Pakistan. Pakistan always wanted a pro-Islamabad government in Afghanistan that could be helpful in acquiring strategic depth against India. Therefore, it supported USA against the Soviet intervention of Afghanistan in 1979 by training *Mujahideen* and providing them with arms and ammunition. Later in the last decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century Pakistan supported the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as it expected the Taliban to recognize the Durand Line as international boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan. But the Taliban comprising majority of Pashtun population never accepted this boundary; rather they encouraged Pashtun nationalism across the Durand Line. In 2001, 9/11 incident and US war on Terror in Afghanistan compelled Pakistan to support it which highly disappointed the militant groups once supported by Pakistan.

The situation is very complex today as US has decided to withdraw from Afghanistan and Taliban have reinforced their presence in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The border areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan have become safe havens for these militant groups. They are getting support from Pakistani intelligence agency (ISI). Pakistan's support to the terrorist organizations is due to its insecurity about Indian influence in Afghanistan. Almost all the governments in Afghanistan rejected the Durand Line and they also accused Pakistan of supporting militants in Afghanistan. It is obvious that Pashtunistan factor has remained a key factor in their bilateral relations. And Afghanistan's stance on Durand Line and Pashtun brotherhood has troubled their relationship. Pakistan considers Afghan demands as irredentist and it claims that the Durand Line is an internationally recognized border.

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## CHINA – AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS IN THE POST TALIBAN PERIOD

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### ABSTRACT

*Sino–Afghan relations have had a distinct characteristic for the past seventeen years. Political, economic and military imperatives have formed the basis of their close relationship despite divergence of interests and political outlook on regional issues. Strong measures have been taken by both countries to reconcile the differences and consolidate their ties. China’s concerns regarding the perceived dangers of extensive US presence in Afghanistan and the challenges it faces following such development in its neighbourhood, have deeply influenced the vitality of China–Afghanistan relationship. A conceptual framework that consists of (a) state as a unitary actor (b) rationality and (c) national interest has been used to analyse the evolution of Sino–Afghan relations. This article argues that considering China’s leverage in the global affairs combined with its close connection with the main shareholders in the Afghan conflict and Afghanistan’s needs and willingness for cooperation, make China a natural partner for the Kabul government.*

**Key words:** China, Afghanistan, Inter-State Relations, Peace.

### INTRODUCTION

The US decision to topple the Taliban regime in 2001 opened a window of opportunity for China to begin close relations with Afghanistan. Although the modern diplomatic relations between the two neighbours were first established in 1955, Afghanistan however occupied a marginal role in Chinese diplomacy for a considerable period<sup>1</sup>. With the exception of the 1970s when China extended its support to Afghan resistance groups against the Soviet invasion<sup>2</sup>, 9/11 incident is seen as the turning point in Beijing’s firm support for the democratic-elected Afghan government<sup>3</sup>.

A survey of the literature on Sino-Afghan relations after 2001 shows that security and economy occupy major interest among the analysts. In doing so, it remains unclear why the Afghan view of the relation has been neglected. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyse the political, economic, and military relations between China and Afghanistan in the past seventeen years and examine Beijing's role in bringing peace and stability for the Afghans.

### POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Good political relations between Afghanistan and China have sound foundation. As early as the seventh century BC, ancient residents of China and Afghanistan began to communicate<sup>4</sup>. Silk Road historically was used for friendly exchanges and mutual prosperity between Afghanistan and China<sup>5</sup>. Afghanistan's recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1950 paved the way for the establishment of modern diplomatic relations between the two neighbours in 1955<sup>6</sup>. The exchange of high-level visits between the two nations resulted in signing the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Non-Aggression in 1960 plus a border agreement in 1963. China also introduced a Maoist movement in 1966 known as the *Shola-e- Jawid* (Eternal Flame) to down play the Soviet backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)<sup>7</sup>. The growing Soviet influence in Afghanistan under Daoud drove China to quietly extend its support to resistance groups. At the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, China became the chief arms-supplier for the guerrilla war against the Red Army<sup>8</sup>. However, once the threat of Soviet encirclement receded, so did China's attention<sup>9</sup>.

In the 1990s, with the ongoing civil war in Afghanistan, China chose not to take sides with any party and recalled its embassy staff from Kabul<sup>10</sup>. As the Taliban raise to power, Afghanistan became a constant worrisome neighbour for China as it remains a grim source of instability<sup>11</sup>. China used Pakistan to secure the Taliban leader's personal guarantee<sup>12</sup> that separatist attacks will not be launched from the Afghan territory<sup>13</sup>. For their part, the Taliban hoped that Beijing might help provide some protection from the severe international sanctions. These exchanges helped Beijing to forge a relationship with the Taliban that continues to the present day<sup>14</sup>.

The Sino-Afghan relations were transformed once again after the downfall of the Taliban regime in 2001<sup>15</sup>. The US invasion that succeeded

in toppling the Taliban regime changed the entire discourse of Afghanistan's future. Beijing's immediate response to the 9/11 attacks was to share intelligence and convince Pakistan to support the NATO/ISAF-Afghanistan mission<sup>16</sup>. The United Nation Security Council (UNSC) including China as its permanent member voted for resolution 1368 and expressed 'unconditional' support in fighting terrorism<sup>17</sup>. However, Beijing demanded that any military action in Afghanistan must be well deliberated and carried out with consensus<sup>18</sup>. It was obvious that China wanted to be part of the decision-making process<sup>19</sup> in relation to its neighbour, as it feared that a possible North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) influence in Central and South Asian countries may impact its strategic and security interests in the region<sup>20</sup>.

Since China reopened its embassy in Kabul and joined Afghanistan's five other neighbours in signing the non-interference pact in 2002, China's political engagement with Afghanistan has strengthened significantly<sup>21</sup>. The diplomatic visits exchanged between the two sides resulted in signing of several agreements while Kabul received hundreds of millions in aid<sup>22</sup>. The 2008 MesAynak agreement and the initiation of a railway between the two states extended the Sino-Afghan political relations unprecedentedly<sup>23</sup>. The 2012 visit by China's Domestic Security Chief and a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party as well as the announcement of a strategic partnership at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), cemented several years of progressive Sino-Afghan relations<sup>24</sup>. In the meantime, China also uses its dominance over SCO to increase regional cooperation among surrounding countries and encourage them to take on a greater role in Afghanistan's future developments<sup>25</sup>.

China also uses its influence in the multilateral forums to address its concerns in Afghanistan<sup>26</sup>. In doing so Beijing hosted several regional meetings<sup>27</sup> and mediated in the talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government<sup>28</sup>. The Istanbul Process<sup>29</sup>, the bilateral dialogues between China and India as well as China and US, the trilateral dialogues between Afghanistan-Pakistan-China, India-China-Russia, and China-Pakistan-Russia on the Afghanistan issue all indicate Beijing's increasing political involvement in Afghanistan<sup>30</sup>. Analysts believe that these dialogues provide an occasion for Chinese officials to demonstrate<sup>31</sup> that Afghanistan can, with Beijing's help, hope to forge a position for itself at the 'heart of Asia' following the withdrawal of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops and US combat troops<sup>32</sup>. China's appointment of a special envoy

to Afghanistan in 2014 signals the increased Chinese focus on the country, with an emphasis on Chinese political and developmental contributions to Afghanistan<sup>33</sup>. China is hoping to use these multilateral frameworks to propose its own ideas for securing Afghanistan's future, and to win other nations' support for its approach<sup>34</sup>. By deepening its political engagements in Afghanistan<sup>35</sup>, China seems to be emerging as a long-term player in the Afghan affairs<sup>36</sup>.

### ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Except for \$83.5 million loan<sup>37</sup>, China and Afghanistan did not have intense economic relations throughout the second half of the 20th century<sup>38</sup>. It was in the year 2001 that Sino-Afghan economic relations started to improve, with China looking towards Afghanistan for an alternative market and resources<sup>39</sup>. Afghanistan as a world class mineral hub borders energy-rich Central Asian states and considering China's desire for energy and resources, this scenario offers China the freedom to dominate the Central Asian trade and investment<sup>40</sup>. On the other hand, the Afghan government is appreciating<sup>41</sup> and taking Beijing's greater role in a positive sense because it can help revive its economy and stabilize the country<sup>42</sup>.

A stable and strong Afghanistan can be a good regional contributor to the Chinese connectivity and economic integration agenda<sup>43</sup>. Based on the Afghanistan's Ministry of Mines assessment, the country owns untapped mineral resources<sup>44</sup> worth three trillion US dollars. These resources include a large amount of lithium, copper and iron reserves<sup>45</sup> which should be enticing<sup>46</sup> for Beijing based economists as Chinese industry is in great need of the mentioned resources. For China, Afghanistan is more than a state that poses security threats to Beijing and the wider region<sup>47</sup>. Notwithstanding the political and security implications, China now sees Afghanistan as a potential economic market<sup>48</sup>. In part due to Xi Jinping's new leadership<sup>49</sup> and interest in the country, analysts believe that Afghanistan is on its way to become an extended part<sup>50</sup> of China's sphere of influence.

Kabul also holds a positive view of China and wants to collaborate with Beijing in its quest towards regional economic integration<sup>51</sup>. Afghanistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China to join the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and accepted Beijing's contract for MesAynak Copper mines<sup>52</sup>. With approximately 30 million metric tons of copper, the MesAynak field that was discovered in 1974 is

believed to hold around \$88 billion worth of copper reserves and will contribute between \$250 and \$500 million per year in taxes paid to Afghanistan by China over the next 30 years<sup>53</sup>. With the addition of \$400 million deal between the Afghan government and China's National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) to explore oil and natural gas reserves in Sar-e Pul and Faryab provinces<sup>54</sup>, China has become the largest foreign investor in Afghanistan<sup>55</sup>.

Beijing sees the development of Afghan economy as a fundamental solution to the elimination of terrorism and extremism<sup>56</sup>. China's investment in the Afghan economy is a win-win situation for both nations. Afghanistan offers China massive natural resource reserves that is necessary for its growing industrial needs, while the Afghan government could use China's investment to revive its weak economy<sup>57</sup>. Besides the direct foreign investment, China's first economic assistance to Afghanistan began in 2002 with \$150 million worth of aid followed by \$15 million in 2003<sup>58</sup>. In 2004, China wrote off more than \$10 million in Afghan government debt and offered a grant worth of \$15 million in 2005. The trend continued as China delivered \$20 million worth of assistance to Afghanistan in 2006 and 2007 and another \$6 million in 2008<sup>59</sup>. The year 2009 saw a drastic rise in Chinese assistance to Afghanistan as Beijing offered \$70 million of aid<sup>60</sup>. In addition to providing about \$24 million of free aid to Afghanistan in 2011<sup>61</sup>, China delivered \$80 million assistance in 2014 and pledged to allocate additional \$240 million for 2015-2018. China's economic aid has also secured Beijing great influence within the Afghan political elite and has positively impacted Chinese business in Afghanistan.

China has emerged as one of Afghanistan's biggest trading partners. Thanks to the Sino-Afghan Economic Committee that was formed in 2006 and the 2010 Comprehensive Cooperative Partnership Agreement, bilateral trade between the two nations has increased significantly since 2001<sup>62</sup>. The Sino-Afghan Economic Committee gave duty free access to about 278 goods imported to China from Afghanistan, which is a great boost for economic cooperation. Promotion of trade represents a success for both states. For example, in 2001, trade between China and Afghanistan equalled a mere \$2.4 million. However, by 2017 the volume of trade reached more than \$1 billion<sup>63</sup>. The volume of trade between China and Afghanistan for the period of 2001 to 2017 is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: AFGHANISTAN'S TRADE WITH CHINA (2001-2017)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Chinese Export to Afghanistan</i>	<i>Chinese Import from Afghanistan</i>	<i>Total Value of Trade in USD Million</i>
2001	2.425	Not Determined	2.425
2002	19.89	5.40	25.29
2003	26.45	0.61	27.06
2004	56.97	0.95	57.92
2005	51.21	1.56	52.77
2006	100.47	0.19	100.66
2007	171	2.00	173
2008	430	3	433
2009	360	1	361
2010	704	12	715.70
2011	577	6	583
2012	549	11	560
2013	437	20	457
2014	1038	15	1053
2015	1044	10	1054
2016	1093	5	1097
2017	1179.3	12	1191.3

*Source: Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook, 2018.*

A major concern pertaining to Afghanistan's trade statistics is a large parallel black market economy that flourishes outside of government control. This phenomenon is a headache for researchers while assessing the accurate volume of Afghanistan's trade with foreign countries, including China.

On the regional level, Afghanistan also hopes to benefit from China's investment in the form of One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative that aims to transform the region into a major trading hub. After all, Afghanistan is a crossroad that links South Asia to Central Asia, and can play a key role in China's trade and investment network. China for its part has agreed to involve Kabul in its OBOR project by signing a memorandum of understanding. China has diverted the Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline from Mazar-i-Sharif to Kunduz and further in Wakhan corridor which could be the new gateway to China's development plans for Xinjiang.

Afghanistan also desires to see China construct a direct linkage through the Afghan-China border in Wakhan with special focus on trade, transit, energy and communication routes<sup>64</sup>.

China's realization of Afghanistan's location as the crossroad has motivated both nations to revive the ancient Silk Road by inaugurating the cargo trains in 2016 and the Sino-Afghan air corridor in 2018. It is expected that both corridors will transport goods worth a \$1 billion annually between the two neighbours<sup>65</sup>. Beijing is using its economic capabilities to connect northern Afghanistan with Central Asia and itself<sup>66</sup>. If fulfilled, such investment may serve as an initial jumpstart to the Afghan economy that lacks a proper infrastructure. The exploration of copper and oil deposits will provide China with a platform to enlarge its footprint in Afghanistan. The agreements can further improve the Sino-Afghan economic ties and to some extent, allow China to meet the increasing thrust of its rapidly growing industry. The jobs that these fields offer for the local people will help the Afghan government to ensure peace and stability in the country<sup>67</sup>.

### MILITARY AND SECURITY RELATIONS

China's first security concerns date back to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, when Beijing decided to support *Mujahideen* as the opposition instead of the Soviet backed government of Kabul<sup>68</sup>. Following the collapse of the Communist government in Kabul, China chose not to recognize the Taliban government and closely monitored Afghanistan's state of affairs as a concerned neighbour<sup>69</sup>. Beijing had its own concerns regarding the *East Turkestan Islamic Movement* (ETIM) and other affiliated Central Asian militant groups such as the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU) and was fearing that an Islamist Afghanistan would indirectly strengthen separate tendencies in its border regions, and that arms would be smuggled from Afghanistan to Islamist resistance groups within China<sup>70</sup>.

China's security policy and the role it ascribes to Afghanistan have changed substantially since 2001. Beijing's stance was partly the result of increasing US presence in neighbouring Afghanistan and the spread of international terrorist networks such as Taliban and ETIM. China started to feel the burden of the instability in Afghanistan and began to improve its military and security relations with Afghanistan<sup>71</sup>. As a good will gesture, China signed an agreement with Afghanistan in 2012 to support the Afghan security forces and train around 300 Afghan police officers in

China over four years. Provision of equipment for the Afghan security forces, mine clearance, counter-narcotics training and judicial training for Afghan security personnel are other areas where Beijing takes a greater role<sup>72</sup>.

Speaking of China's security concerns, an unstable Afghanistan is of serious concern for Beijing which shares a short border in its north-eastern corridor. Afghanistan is located within both second and third 'rings' of China's national security<sup>73</sup>. In response to the direct threats to Xinjiang province, China aims to create a zone of stability around it<sup>74</sup>. Part of this policy is gaining leverage in neighbouring countries to help Beijing influence their approaches to Xinjiang as well as the Uyghur populations across Central Asia. Interestingly, Afghanistan and other regional governments have become loath in recent years to resist Beijing's requests to monitor, restrict, and extradite Uyghur suspected extremist or secessionist groups.

The security of western China and development of the entire region as stated by China's Foreign Minister, Wang, is associated with the stability of Afghanistan<sup>75</sup>. At a time that China is trying to integrate its minority Uyghur community into its broader economic and development framework, the whole investments can face a threat of insurgency backed up from Afghanistan<sup>76</sup>. Xinjiang has already faced threats from the *East Turkestan Islamic Movement* (ETIM) during the Taliban regime as they infiltrated from their sanctuaries within the Taliban controlled territory<sup>77</sup>. Failure of the current Afghan government or its possible collapse to the hard line militants could further embolden ETIM and its associates in the whole region. With Islamic militants on the rise, major parts of China's One Belt One Road initiatives like that of One Belt One Road initiative, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and establishment of special economic zone in Kashgar will surely pose serious challenges<sup>78</sup>. Rutting opined that China in addition to a comprehensive political solution that includes Taliban, now has a more favourable view of ISAF's presence in Afghanistan.

Besides the direct spill over effects, a weakly governed Afghanistan can also threaten the neighbouring Central Asian states where China has a number of mega initiatives. Beijing is looking to be connected to the Central Asian transport system and import energy through pipelines from Russia and other Central Asian states. China's projects of regional connectivity in Central Asia are 'conditioned' on sustained stability in Afghanistan<sup>79</sup>. In addition to the security threats, the opium production

of Afghanistan is another challenge for China. Afghanistan has been one of the leading producers of narcotics globally and together with Pakistan and Iran is part of the 'Golden Crescent' that has been a route for illegal drugs smuggling to China<sup>80</sup>. The production of a large amount of narcotics can seriously challenge the Chinese society and amalgamation of illicit economy can result in contamination of the booming Chinese economy.

Beijing's role in Afghanistan is cautiously evolving towards more engagement in the military area, which reflects PRC's concerns about the decline of security and the impact this could have on the region as a whole<sup>81</sup>. Most Chinese leaders advocate avoiding military intervention in Afghanistan and emphasize on deepening diplomatic and economic engagements. However, recent reports of Chinese intelligence services and the PLA movements in Afghanistan have increased speculation whether Beijing has abandoned its long lasting posture of non-interference policy. The limited efficacy of military intervention, China's fear of becoming a target for non-Uyghur militant groups, People's Liberation Army's capability and China's long-held position of non-interference all play a major role in Chinese leader's decision to avoid military intervention and instead deepen diplomatic and economic engagements with Afghanistan<sup>82</sup>.

China's introduction of a new anti-terrorism law that allows Chinese security forces to play a role in overseas missions, withdrawal of ISAF forces in 2014 and the shift in the geographical nature of the terrorist threats facing China, all play an important role in explaining China's increasing military and security relations with Afghanistan<sup>83</sup>. ETIM has undergone a noticeable change since 2014 and is a far more credible threat. With regards to Afghanistan, the new law also demands Chinese security forces to engage in more serious counter terrorism training with their Pakistani counterparts. It is also claimed that Beijing will station PLA soldiers in northern Afghanistan in order to counter terrorist efforts on its short border with Afghanistan<sup>84</sup>. The site will be only the second overseas site after Djibouti with 500 troops training their Afghan counterparts in Badakhshan province<sup>85</sup>. Military interaction<sup>86</sup> between China and Afghanistan would benefit Beijing in gaining a valuable counterterrorism experience and a larger foothold in Afghanistan. China is keeping a close watch over its Uyghur citizens and its ground presence in Afghanistan would allow Beijing to directly combat ETIM and capture Uyghur jihadis without relying on the cooperation of Kabul.

Beijing also improved its intelligence cooperation with Afghanistan and accepted that its token presence in Afghanistan's security affairs is

no longer an adequate strategy. In 2017, China offered \$90 million for Afghanistan's Badakhshan province alone and agreed to train, fund, and equip Afghan police. The Afghan government also set up a new military base in Badakhshan with China covering all material and technical expenses<sup>87</sup>. In exchange, Afghanistan not only assured Beijing that they will not let the ETIM to take advantage of the Afghan territory to engage in activities endangering China but will also extradite 15 Uyghurs to China. The Afghan Air Force conducted several airstrikes in Jurm and Warduj districts of Badakhshan targeting the reported safe haven for foreign militants<sup>88</sup>.

The Sino-Afghan relations took an increasingly security-centric nature when PLA's chief of general staff, Fang Fenghui, visited Kabul in 2016. As a striking development in Sino-Afghan security relations, law enforcement departments from both states initiated a joint operation in the Wakhan Corridor to combat terrorism and organized transnational criminal activities. Beijing not only increased its military presence in its border, but also pledged to provide equipment for the Afghan border police in order to conduct patrols across its narrow border<sup>89</sup>. China also joined the new military quadrilateral, involving the army chiefs of Afghanistan, China, Tajikistan and Pakistan and encourage Kabul to carry more operations in Badakhshan, in order to target ETIM fighters<sup>90</sup>.

### CHINA'S ROLE IN THE RECONCILIATION OF AFGHANISTAN

Since 9/11, China has played a constructive role in the redevelopment process of Afghanistan. Although Beijing did not send troops to participate in counterinsurgency operations, it participated in multilateral efforts in Afghanistan in the 2002-12 period, and supported the Afghan government in Kabul both financially and politically<sup>91</sup>. It was in the context of US and NATO withdrawal that China stepped up its peace efforts in Afghanistan by intelligence sharing and mediating the talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government<sup>92</sup>. This section explores China's peace mediation in Afghanistan in general, and argues that China can facilitate the Afghan peace process by coordinating its efforts with other powers, including the US and other regional actors.

China's support for peace and stability in Afghanistan consists of respecting the country as an independent state finally governed by the Afghans; promote a progressive society; have an Afghanistan friendly to its neighbours; and conduct international cooperation, with Beijing playing

a dominant role. To achieve these goals, Beijing has chosen a four-point approach: contributing to Afghanistan's security and stability, developing the Afghan economy, political reconciliation, allowing Afghans to choose their model of governance, and lastly enhancing international cooperation<sup>93</sup>.

China is enjoying the support of Taliban and the Afghan government for its peace initiatives. Beijing's non-interference policy and its positive historical legacy in Afghanistan are the main reasons that its role as a facilitator has been acceptable to the Afghan government and the Taliban<sup>94</sup>. Despite China's assistance to the Afghan government through the years, Beijing is not seen as an adversary force by the Taliban. Another important factor is China's enormous influence over Pakistan as its closest ally. If peace negotiation is to succeed, Pakistan's presence is vital. There is no state with better leverage than China over Pakistan to get its support for the process and bring on board the Taliban<sup>95</sup>. Besides, China is in a great position to lure Afghanistan and Pakistan to cooperate in this settlement by offering extensive benefits of regional trade and economic development<sup>96</sup>. As a participant in groupings such as the 6+1 Dialogue, the Quadrilateral Coordination Group, and the Istanbul Ministerial Process, Beijing can also bring ideas and support from these dialogues to its brokering efforts.

China's off and on relations with the Taliban and the hatred among the Taliban insurgents toward the West, is in fact, advantageous to China<sup>97</sup>. Beijing was successful in establishing an unofficial relation with the Taliban during their rule over Afghanistan. China's mediation has also received support from other regional powers such as India and Pakistan. In an interview, the Indian ambassador to Afghanistan declared his support for China's role in the Afghan peace process and called for close working relationship to fight terrorism. Pakistan also welcomes China's mediating initiatives and wishes to end the spread of extremism in the regions<sup>98</sup>. It is in this context that China is desperate to ensure stability in Afghanistan in order to address its own security concerns and to realize its regional economic ambitions.

China's efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, however, faces constraints. Beijing has not used its influence on Pakistan to end Taliban's terrorist attacks and its policy of using the group as an instrument of its foreign policy in its relations with Afghanistan. China instead has focused on encouraging both nations to crackdown ETIM sanctuaries in their respective territories<sup>99</sup>. Besides, China has no intention of taking on a

security role that could lead it to clash with any of the different parties or risk it becoming a target for international terrorist networks. As such China's narrow approach has failed to tackle the underlying causes of the Afghan conflict. The resource extraction and economic development of Afghanistan alone cannot quell the conflict<sup>100</sup>.

There is no doubt that China's role in Afghanistan is growing, but its success in stabilizing its neighbour depends on collaboration with the US and other regional actors. Despite preserving its ties with the Taliban and even hosting their delegates on its soil, China's influence in Afghanistan is limited particularly as compared to America. US not only plays a dominant role in the Afghan conflict but also enjoys considerable influence over the Afghan government. Taliban also have rejected the Afghan government's offers of peace talks and are only interested in talking with Washington<sup>101</sup>. In this regard, China can be a critical partner for the US in Afghanistan and can play an important role in ensuring peace and stability for the Afghans.

Afghanistan has high regard for China and looks toward its neighbours as a 'reliable strategic partner' that help speed up its development<sup>102</sup>. China not only has the political and military capability, but also has the engineering and industrial might to stabilize its conflict ridden neighbour. Beijing's increasing involvement in Afghanistan reflects its interest in a stable immediate neighbourhood. Although security remains a long-term interest, there is scope for China in the short and medium term to improve the situation in Afghanistan<sup>103</sup>. Hence, it is clear that Beijing will not be passive with regard to Afghanistan and is speeding up its efforts by relying on its traditional strength of economic involvement combined with a proactive diplomacy. In the meantime, there is a strong will among Afghan leadership to strengthen communication, coordination and collaboration with China and there is acceptability for China's increased role in Afghanistan amongst the masses alike<sup>104</sup>.

Since 2001, China and Afghanistan have signed several agreements and solidified significant business ventures that include the 2006 Treaty of Good Neighbourly Friendship and Cooperation, the \$3.5 billion MesAynak venture in 2008, the 2011 oil and gas agreement of about \$700 million, the bilateral and trilateral meetings with other countries in the region including the Istanbul Ministerial Process as well as The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Strategic Partnership Agreement in 2012 and the military quadrilateral consisting the army chiefs of Afghanistan, China, Tajikistan and Pakistan<sup>105</sup>. All this signifies that Beijing is both

politically and economically engaged in Afghanistan. These strategic preferences indicate that China is aware of Kabul's importance for its vital political, economic, security and geopolitical interests. Accordingly, it is a win-win situation for both nations to stabilize the region and deepen their strategic partnership. Afghanistan in this sense offers a testing ground for Beijing's regional strategy and any Chinese achievement will prove the viability of Beijing's international governance model<sup>106</sup>.

In addition to supporting Afghanistan for long term success, China's investment in Afghanistan's political, economy, and military sectors would most likely help China with its current development projects and economic interests. Besides increasing Afghanistan's human capital, China can create millions of acres of productive land from wastelands and sustainable jobs for hundreds of thousands of landless Afghan peasants<sup>107</sup>. With China investing in a stable Afghanistan, it will prevent insurgent groups from accessing Xinjiang region and igniting an Uyghur insurgency. Beijing's ultimate objective in the region is to create an area of stability across its western periphery, secure an accessible corridor into the energy rich Middle East, establish new trade and investment opportunities, and extend its soft power to increase its overall strategic reach<sup>108</sup>. China's deep-rooted political, economic and military relations with Afghanistan would not only bring economic benefits for both nations but would also stabilize the whole region and enhance Beijing's global stature.

The success of China's current peace initiatives in Afghanistan depends on several factors. Although peace is the highest priority for the Afghan government and is a requirement for kick-starting its economy, Afghanistan's achievements for the past 17 years should not be compromised in the peace talks<sup>109</sup>. Second, the absence of a central authority among the Taliban and their disparity is a big challenge for the negotiations. In this regard, China can use its influence over Pakistan to bring the Taliban and other anti-government factions to the process. The people of Afghanistan should be aware of the peace negotiations and China should use its diplomacy to create a power-sharing structure that is open for Taliban's entry as a political force<sup>110</sup>. China's involvement in peace negotiations should be in cooperation with all parties involved in the conflict<sup>111</sup>. The Afghan peace settlement will be more conducive if China involves US and all the regional powers and aligns its activities with the international community that are present in Afghanistan. Beijing too is in great position to mobilize SCO members and help them play a more robust role in the peace process. No matter how risky Afghanistan's

reconstruction is, China's comprehensive involvement is necessary.

### CONCLUSION

The findings of this study clearly show that preserving stability in Afghanistan, promoting its peaceful reconstruction and strengthening pragmatic cooperation are top priorities for both China and Afghanistan. The increasing inter-state relations between the two countries signals both states' leadership determination and strong will to deepen communication and collaboration pertaining to major international, regional and bilateral issues. A stable future for Afghanistan depends on China's coordination in reaching consensus among surrounding nations. A peaceful Afghanistan can be more than a state that possesses security threats to China and its interest in the wider region. Afghanistan's geopolitical position as the heart of Asia, and its untapped mineral resources can turn the country into economic market for China. Instability in Afghanistan, however, will be an obstacle for Chinese investment in the region and a threat to Beijing's continued penetration of power and influence in South and Central Asia<sup>112</sup>.

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# THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PEACE PROCESS AND THE PREDICAMENT OF (IS-K) IN AFGHANISTAN

MOHAMMAD HANIFI SHARIFI

## ABSTRACT

*After the Taliban were removed from power in 2001, the new democratic government was established in Kabul. The US-led forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), consisting of 29 member states from North America and Europe along with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and Afghan national army fought against the Taliban for bringing peace and stability in Afghanistan. Nobody then assumed that peace would not be possible without the Taliban. Many Pashtun militant groups and the Taliban, whom the US saw as 'terrorist' groups, were excluded from the 2001 Bonn process that set the road map for peace and security in Afghanistan. Now the US policy toward Afghanistan has changed in favor of Taliban, which provides an opportunity to the neighboring countries to use the Taliban for their own political purposes in Afghanistan. This paper examines the role of neighboring countries in the peace process of Afghanistan and also discusses as the role of the Islamic State of Khurasan (IS-K) that makes the peace process more complicated for Afghans.*

## THE COMPLEXITY OF PEACE PROCESS

Soon after the Bonn agreement in 2001, when Hamid Karzal assumed office in Kabul as interim president, the US policy was to ignore the Taliban. Even the UN did little to include them, partly as a result of US pressure and partly based on the belief that it would be possible to reach out to them later. In these 17 years of war 38,480 civilian lives were lost. Now the Trump administration has taken a new approach to bring the Taliban onto the negotiation table to finally end up the war, which has been the longest war in American history.

Flaws in the US policy and its superficiality about the people of Afghanistan cost heavily both Afghanistan and the US. The Taliban with the support of Pakistan has succeeded to rebuild their militant network to fight back Afghanistan government and its allies. The Taliban and other militant groups remain deeply rooted in south Afghanistan, and the Pakistan frontier remains a Taliban safe haven. No doubt, that Iraq war sucked more US resources which affected the war in Afghanistan and day by day the Taliban got stronger to fight back.

According to Afghanistan foreign policy experts different players are involved in Afghanistan, both regional players and international players – Pakistan, Iran, Russia, China, US, India, and Saudi Arabia. However, these countries have their own interest in Afghanistan which make them more important for Afghanistan. Taliban has played well with the support of Pakistan and other countries to rebuild their insurgent groups and fight back. Pakistan betrayed the Afghanistan government and the US government by providing the safe haven for the Taliban. Afghanistan's foreign policy give priority to Pakistan as a regional player, and most of the Afghan political leaders in Kabul believe that Afghanistan government should reach out to Islamabad for peace, rather than with the Taliban in Qatar or Moscow. As Ashraf Ghani stated in Davos meeting in interview with CNN, that peace process in Afghanistan requires regional support from the neighboring countries<sup>1</sup>. Afghanistan government is working to achieve stable peace not only in Afghanistan but also in the region in the long run. The question still remains that even if such a peace is achieved will there be the end of war for Afghanistan? Will there be no insurgency anymore in Afghanistan? Is finally Pakistan convinced that a stable Afghanistan will benefit everyone? There are many Reasons for Afghans to worry, as after the death of Mullah Omer in Pakistan, the Taliban got divided. Even all the Taliban are no more under the control of Pakistan, but now they are also influenced by Russia and Iran. Iran officially confirmed that they are in contact with the Taliban, as high officials of the Taliban visited Tehran. Russia has already been active in the peace process by holding two gatherings in Moscow between the Afghan political leaders and the Taliban. Zalmay Khalilzad, the US diplomat and the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation at the US Department of State, remained active through seven rounds of his negotiations with the Taliban.

### TALIBAN AND THE ROLE OF PAKISTAN

The supreme leader of Taliban Mullah Omar died of tuberculosis in April 2013, but his death was kept a secret by the Taliban and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) for two years until it was revealed in July 2015 by Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS). Following him, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor was elected as a leader, who was killed later in May 2016 by a drone strike on his vehicle which had crossed into Pakistan from Iran. In 2015 the Taliban split as Mullah Rasool broke away from the Taliban mainstream leadership and established his own group, the High Council of Afghanistan Islamic Emirate, which is suspected to be a client of Iran. The split was a result of disagreement over the ascension of Mullah Akhtar Mansoor as leader of the Taliban. Rasool's followers accuse Mansoor of hijacking the movement due to personal greed. Rasool said that he and his supporters tried to persuade him to step down and let the new leader be chosen by the Taliban council, but Mansoor refused. It should be noted that Mansoor was accused in the past of having amassed considerable personal wealth while controlling much of the Taliban's finances.

Antonio Giustozzi and Silab Mangal who interviewed Mullah Rasool in March 2015, noted that "Rasool argues not only that several key components of the Taliban, like the Peshawar Shura and the Mashad office, have yet to endorse Mansoor, but also many Taliban members who have endorsed Mansoor are not ready to follow him through his reconciliation approach towards Kabul, if that meant sacrificing the values and beliefs for which the Taliban have fought".<sup>2</sup> Antonio stated that during this interview Rasool raised the issue of the quadrilateral approach involving US, Chinese, Pakistani and Afghan diplomats working together to re-launch negotiations with the Taliban which does not sufficiently represent the variety of regional interests; excluding Iran, in particular. This would in his view result in the failure of reconciliation efforts.<sup>3</sup> This idea is undermined by Rasool's claim that he and other Taliban linked to Iran would not accept negotiating with Kabul at least until the Afghan government talks to Mansoor. Rasool positions himself slightly closer than Mansoor to what the bulk of the Taliban cadres and commanders would seem to consider their preferred option: negotiating only in the presence of major concessions from Kabul.<sup>4</sup> After Mullah Mansoor died, the Quetta-based Taliban Shura elected Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada, a Pashtun belonging to the Noorzai clan or tribe, as the leader. Hibatullah is a

religious scholar, and is reported to be the issuer of the majority of Taliban's fatwas. He was also the head of the Taliban's Islamic courts. His father was the Imam of their village. It seems that for Afghanistan government, Quetta Shura is much more important than other Shura which seek support of Pakistan to put pressure on the Quetta Shura to come and negotiate with Afghanistan government. The fact is, that Taliban are no longer under the control of Pakistan, as a Russia and Iran are also involved in supporting Taliban which makes the peace process more complex.

Pakistan has always been critical of the friendly relations between India and Afghanistan. Perwez Musharaf in an interview with BBC in December of (2015) stated that it is true that "we are backing up the Taliban because we are worried about Indian influence in Afghanistan"<sup>5</sup>. The Afghanistan government always views this act of Pakistan as direct interference Afghanistan affairs, undermining Afghanistan's sovereignty. In some way, the Afghan diplomats have been ineffective to convince Pakistan government that their interest is secure in Afghanistan. This matter is one of the main obstacles for the Afghan peace process. That Pakistan will never give up on Afghanistan, is a clear message by Pakistan. However, for stable peace, the Afghan officials need to give a clear answer to this question, that upto which extent Taliban are independent? And what are the demands of Pakistan from Afghanistan? It is quite clear, that power is in the control of military in Pakistan. In such a situation Ashraf Ghani quite seeks to convince the people of Pakistan to put pressure on their government to go for peace with Afghanistan. Asharf Ghani in his first visit to Pakistan after Imran Khan came to power, travelled to different provinces of Pakistan meeting different official and influential figures to approach them for peace. In his speech at the Islamabad Institute of Strategic Studies, he stated that "Afghanistan wants to normalize the relations with Pakistan".

### ISLAMIC STATE OF KHURASAN (IS-K)

Though the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was established in October 2006 by the *Mujahideen Shura Council, Jama'at al-Tawhid Wal-Jihad* since 2003-04 has been targeting Shiite mosques civilians, and Iraqi government, their aim was to expel the US from Iraq and reinstall (Sunni) Islamic state or Caliphate. One of the main purposes of this Salafist jihadist group is to expand their territories and they did expand to Syria and became ISIS (The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, the ISIS recruited their

cadres from a vast territorial space from east to west, especially from those countries which had more Sunni followers. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asian countries were a perfect target for the ISIS to expand their Islamic Caliphate. However, IS-K is working to create influence in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region by poaching up on the discontented youth<sup>7</sup>. Yet, despite its declared goal of creating a global Caliphate, the actions and strategies of the group in the Wilayat Khorasan show a more complex set of dynamics.<sup>8</sup> In Afghanistan, the situation has been more complicated. The IS-K, Afghan avatar of ISIS, has more territorial presence in the vast ungoverned borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan along the disputed Durand Line. Most of the fighters in the IS-K are former Pakistani Taliban members<sup>9</sup>.

The analysts have long ago predicted that Afghanistan is a country ripe to host the Islamic State fighters fleeing from Iraq and Syria, particularly so as thousands of foreign fighters in ISIS ranks were from Central Asian states bordering Afghanistan in the north.<sup>10</sup> There is no exact figure, that can illustrate how many people are fighting under the command of the IS-K in Afghanistan, but the Pentagon estimates that between 1,000-3,000 IS-K fighters are active in Afghanistan. Among these IS-K active fighters, there are Arab fighters, Central Asian fighters, and their activities are limited to three districts Nazyan, Achin and DehBala which are also known as Haska. The senior leadership of IS-K are the former *Tehrik-Taliban-Pakistan* (TTP) commanders.<sup>11</sup> The mid-level leadership of IS-K is mostly recruited in Afghanistan from the lower rung of Taliban leadership. The combination of Taliban and IS-K thus makes the peace process more complicated. Antonio's interviews with members of IS-K and Taliban in 2016-2017, noted that basically the Pakistani component of IS-K is coming under one command as *Tehrik-e Khilafat Pakistan*, which fully followed Aslam Farooqi, as did the bulk of different Afghan groups belonging to Azizullah Haqqani and Muslimdost, as well as *Khilafat Afghan* and *Tehrik-e Khilafat Khorasan*. IS-K is active in Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan, Laghman, Logar, Paktika, Zabul, Kapisa, Parwan, Baghlan, Ghazni, and Helmand, as far as Afghanistan is concerned.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, the Taliban have shown interest in reaching mutual understanding with IS-K, since the Taliban's conflict with IS has been a significant distraction from its aim of fighting the Afghan government. Moreover, fighting a war against a jihadi organization is implicitly delegitimizing the Taliban. Still, a permanent ceasefire and long-

term coexistence between the Taliban and IS-K are ambitious aims as the two organizations compete for territory, recruits and increasingly for the sources of revenue.<sup>13</sup>

The Taliban and the Islamic State have uneasily co-existed in Afghanistan for almost three years. Though they don't have much ideological difference, but their battle is for territory and revenue and both organizations seek to fight the Afghanistan government. From their friendly beginnings in late 2014, the two organizations locked horns during 2015, fighting each other bitterly, especially in Nangarhar and Zabul provinces. Fighting continued in 2016-17, even though it has subsided somewhat. At any given time during these three years, substantial parts of the Taliban and of the Islamic State (IS) stayed out of the fight, and even in some cases signed formal non-belligerence agreements with each other. Despite frequent clashes, occasionally there have been allegations of Taliban-IS cooperation in specific cases. From the perspective of Afghanistan's stability, an improvement in IS-Taliban relations could be a dangerous development that would substantially increase the threat faced by the Afghan authorities. However, the question remains as to how likely is that to happen? And to what extent Taliban and Islamic State converge in their aims and to what extent are they incompatible?<sup>14</sup>

In the summer of 2017, IS-K split into two factions, one led by Aslam Farooqi, a former commander of *Lashkar-e Taiba*, and one led by Moawiya, a former *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU) commander. The cause of the split was the controversial decision by a majority of the military council of IS-K to select Aslam Farooqi as the new governor of Khorasan province. A minority, mainly composed of Central Asians, with some Afghan commanders linked to them, rejected Aslam Farooqi and de facto split away. The minority suspected Aslam Farooqi of being an agent of the Pakistani ISI, or at least of having links to them.<sup>15</sup> Such connection between Aslam Farooqi and ISI is always possible because ISI want to keep their influence on these military groups to use them later for their own political purposes, as they did with the Taliban in these 17 years' war. Most of the people in Afghanistan believe that Afghanistan *jihad* against former Soviet Union was hijacked by the Pakistani military state and they also monopolize the IS-K military groups.

### WHO LOSES AND WHO WILL WIN, IF THE PEACE PROCESS GOES WRONG

The Afghan political leaders believe that Pakistan is playing a double game with the Afghanistan government. Even officials from the government claimed that Pakistani strategy is to direct the Taliban to keep fighting in summer and do the negotiations in winter. This strategy served well for the Taliban militants and their leaders, who hide in Pakistan borders. The IS-K soon added to the puzzle, and Afghan political leaders believe that now Pakistan is playing a new game by pushing the Taliban into the negotiating table, and recruiting low rank Taliban members in the IS-K network in Afghanistan to continue the war. In such a scenario, it will be a win win situation for Pakistan military state. There are concerns that after the collapse of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Pakistan will monopolize the IS-K group in Afghanistan as the members of IS-K were recruited from the old members of Taliban which have good relations with Pakistan ISI. Afghanistan political leaders have limited choice, and they should think of the unthinkable scenario because for a long while they have been betrayed by Pakistani politicians.

In 2001-2002, the first year of the Afghan government, the very idea of talking to Taliban was politically untenable, largely due to the well-known connections between the Taliban and Al Qaeda in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Having been defeated rather swiftly, the Taliban were excluded from the Bonn Conference and Agreement of 2001, which established the Afghan Interim Authority, under the protection of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) endorsed by the United Nations.

Steps towards peace negotiations were stymied from the beginning, and Karzai in the end of his presidency tried to compensate his mistake by rejecting the Taliban peace deal. He called the Taliban 'brother', which was hugely criticized. However, he asserted that Taliban are our brothers who are misled. But the Taliban refused to negotiate with the former President Hamid Karzai's government in 2010. The Karzai government had offered the Taliban a peace deal by conducting the first and grand peace *Jirga* in 2010 and then a *Loya Jirga* in 2011. The National Consultative Peace Jirga, held in June 2010, was Karzai's attempt to offer a public forum for Afghans to voice their views regarding reintegration and reconciliation, and to build a wider domestic and international consensus.<sup>16</sup>

Same researchers in Afghanistan did a field study by drawing a model

to find a way how to reach a comprehensive peace deal with the Taliban. They believe that as the Taliban are the outcome of several facts and until those motives are resolved, it will be impossible to reach a stable peace. When Imran Khan assumed power in Pakistan, he came with an assertion of peace and stability in the region to make a welfare state and rescue Pakistan from financial crisis. He is widely believed to be a puppet of military, having no real power in Pakistan. For the first time when Ashraf Ghani and Imran Khan met at the side line of 14<sup>th</sup> Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meeting, the details of their talks were not disclosed to media, but Haroon Chakhansuri, the spokesperson of the President of Afghanistan in his brief about these talks between Ashraf Ghani and Imran Khan, stated that Ashraf Ghani talked about those Taliban who are in Quetta. To this Imran Khan stated that they still exist because they live among the refugees which makes them unrecognizable. From such a statement it becomes clear that Pakistan is still in the denial mode which is a very old game.

Besides Pakistan, there are many other internal problems in modern Afghanistan due to low level of modernization and development. There is sufficient historical evidence to show that the government in Kabul has been ineffective in exercising power in a large part of the country having inhospitable terrain. Politics and power in Afghanistan are strongly influenced by the country's ethnic complexities. Thus, deep ethno-linguistic divisions and the decentralized nature of the Afghan polity provide convenient fault lines ready for exploitation. Even after the ouster of the Taliban in 2001, a fundamental problem has been the failure of the Afghan government institutions to provide good governance and socio-political development in many parts of the country.<sup>17</sup> Such a problem also counts as obstacle for peace, while Afghanistan is in transition from charismatic to bureaucratic way of exercising power, the Warlord giving their place to new young and bureaucratic figures making Afghanistan more vulnerable and at the same time strong. Another challenge that has been perpetuated by this ambiguity is the lack of a coordinated strategy between the Afghan government and international coalition. Currently, there are a number of parallel and at times competing reconciliation programs. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), in its peace and reconciliation program, has decided to cast the widest net possible in offering talks to almost all segments of the insurgents of Afghan origin in the country.<sup>18</sup> For the US the case is different, President Trump just wants to finish this war to reduce the expenses of his government, But for

Afghanistan, it is vital to secure the peace, otherwise the war will further destabilize the country and the state.

While President Ashraf Ghani returned from Pakistan, the seventh round of peace negotiation in Qatar started between the Taliban and US. The same day a severe attack occurred in Kabul causing many civilian casualties. This was a loud message that Taliban is the enemy of the nation, not merely the enemy of state. Ashraf Ghani has a heavy responsibility to lead the Afghans toward the statehood of a nation, but it seems that he took the peace process and Pakistan for granted. The Afghans need to grasp their historical past to awaken the nationalist feeling, but it will not bring glory itself until the Afghans learn from their historical mistakes and avoid them in future.

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## PASHTUN SPRING —A GRASS ROOT HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT

FAZALUR RAHMAN AFRIDI

### WHO ARE PASHTUNS ?

The **Pashtuns**, historically known as ethnic Afghans<sup>1</sup> mainly live in Pakistan and Afghanistan<sup>2</sup>. They speak the Pashto Language and adhere to Pashtunwali, which is a traditional set of ethics guiding individual and communal conduct. Globally, the Pashtuns are estimated to number around 50 million<sup>3</sup>, but an accurate count remains elusive due to the lack of an official census in Afghanistan since 1979. The majority of Pashtuns live in the region regarded as Pashtunistan, which has been split between the two countries since the British-imposed Durand Line border was formed. There are also significant Pashtun diaspora communities in the cities of Sindh and Punjab in Pakistan, particularly in Karachi and Lahore. Recently Pashtun diaspora has also developed in the Arab Gulf States, primarily in the United Arab Emirates. The Pashtuns are a significant minority group in Pakistan, where they constitute the second-largest ethnic group or about 15% of the population.

As the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan (anywhere between 42 and 60 percent of the population), Pashtuns have been the dominant ethno-linguistic group for over 300 years. During the Dehli Sultanate era, the 15th–16th century Lodi Dynasty briefly replaced the pre-existing rulers in North India until Babur completely deposed the Lodi dynasty. Other Pashtuns fought the Safavids and an independent Mughal state in early 18th century<sup>4</sup> after a successful revolution by Mirwais Hotak followed by the conquests of Ahmad Shah Durrani<sup>5</sup>. The Barakzai dynasty played a vital role during the Great Game from the 19th century to 20th century

as they were caught between the imperialist designs of the British and Russian empires.

The Pashtuns are the world's largest Segmentary Lineage ethnic group. The number of Pashtun tribes and clans is estimated between 350 to over 400<sup>6</sup>. There have been many notable Pashtun people throughout history: Ahmad Shah Durrani is regarded as the founder of the modern state of Afghanistan, while Bacha Khan was a Pashtun independence activist against the rule of the British Raj. Some others include Malala Yousofzai, Imran Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Hamid Karzai, and Ashraf Ghani. Looking for the origin of Pashtuns and the Afghans is something like exploring the source of the Amazon.

The vast majority of the Pashtuns is found in the traditional Pashtun Homeland, located in the area south of the Amu Darya in Afghanistan, and west of the Indus river in Pakistan, which includes Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and the northern part of Balochistan Province. Pashtun communities are also located in western and northern Afghanistan, the Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir regions, and northwestern Punjab Province (Mianwali and Attock), Pakistan. There are also sizeable Muslim communities in India, which are of largely Pashtun ancestry<sup>7</sup>. Throughout the Indian subcontinent, they are often referred to as Pathans<sup>8</sup>.

The modern history of Pathans goes back to the Delhi Sultanate, particularly the Hotak Dynasty and the Durrani Empire. The Hotaks were Ghilji tribesmen who rebelled against the Safavids and seized control over much of Persia from 1722 to 1729<sup>9</sup>. This was followed by the conquests by Ahmad Shah Durrani, who was a former high-ranking military commander under Nader Shah. He created the last Afghan Empire that covered most of what is now Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir, Indian Punjab, as well as the Kohistan and Khorasan provinces of Iran<sup>10</sup>.

## MAIN PROBLEMS FACED BY PASHTUNS

### **Babrra Massacre of Pashtuns in Charsadda District**

The history of Pashtuns living in Pakistan is replete with lies and deceit right from the creation of Pakistan. The first massacre of Pashtuns in Pakistan, known as Babrra massacre, occurred on 12 August 1948 in the Charsadda District of the North-West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa–KPK), when hundreds of unarmed members of the *Khudai*

*Khidmatgar* movement were shot dead on the orders of the then Chief Minister Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan. They were protesting against the promulgation of Public Safety Ordinance by the provincial governor, termination of the elected government of Dr. Khan and the resulting arrests of *Khudai Khidmatgar* leaders and confiscation of their property. 600 people were killed and even larger numbers were injured.

### **Long History of Wars**

Pashtuns are considered to be a Royal Race with their predecessors like Ahmad Shah Abdali, Sher Shah Suri, Kushal Khan Khattack etc. Unfortunately, a long history of wars and the tensions between the big powers Russia and Britain and Soviet Union and USA. Afghanistan was a battle ground for foreign forces.

In recent history, after 9/11 and the subsequent invasion of Swat and FATA by Pakistani military resulted in the massive displacement of Pashtuns to Punjab and Sindh and created tensions between local populations and Pashtuns. Pashtuns were stereotyped as terrorist due to propaganda unleashed by the Pakistani media and military establishment. Pashtuns have been caught between the military and militants. The military operations in FATA and KPK destroyed the economy and social fabric of Pashtun society, while the 33 billion dollars received from US by Pakistan were consumed in Punjab. Miran Shah Bazar in Waziristan and Bara Market in Khyber Agency (grand commercial centres in Tribal Areas) were razed to ground and looted by the Pakistan Army. Pashtuns who were the main victims of terrorism and badly needed help, felt betrayed by the Pakistani State by neglecting their needs and were further humiliated on daily basis by the military treating them as terrorists and criminals. This sense of deprivation boiled to the point that the Pashtun educated youth turned out to streets to protest against these atrocities of humiliation at military check-points, racial profiling, enforced disappearances, torture and arbitrary killings.

### **Plundering Resources**

Pakistan is known to be plundering the resources of Pashtuns. According to Said Alam Mehsood, KPK is energy surplus Province, but still suffers from hours of load shedding on daily basis. KPK produces the cheapest hydel electricity of 5,700 MW while its consumption needs are only about 1,500 MW. The cost of hydel electricity per unit is 1.25 Pakistani Rupees but the same electricity is re-sold to Pashtuns on 19 Rupees per unit.

Electricity is produced by PKP but its distribution is controlled by Punjab. Even the Royalty of electricity produced is not given to Pashtuns. KPK has the potential to produce over 70,000 MW of cheap electricity but central government controlled by Punjabi elite does not let this potential to be exploited.

PKP provides for more than half of the oil demand of Pakistan and produces gas also, but the oil refineries are established in Punjab, which deprive the Pashtuns of thousands of jobs and their right to exploit and further explore the energy potentials in their region.

Similarly, no royalty is given to Pashtuns for uranium produced in Karak and Lakki Marwat Areas with the excuse that it is defence matter. But when it comes to treating the cancer patients caused by radioactivity, nothing is done in terms of compensation and treatment of cancer patients.

The vast natural resources and forests of Pashtunistan are not exploited for the benefit of locals because the central government controlled by the Punjabi elite does not want Pashtun dominated areas to be developed. Instead, militancy and radical Islam are propagated and imposed by establishing about 20,000 madrassas (religious Wahabi schools) to destroy already established infrastructure of tourism and economy of the region. The anti-Pashtun policies of Punjabi elite have been catastrophic for Pashtun social, economic, political and demographic conditions. With no jobs and future prospects in the own land, more than 10 million Pashtuns have been forced to migrate to other countries in search of their livelihood.

### CPEC AND CHINA

Pashtuns want sovereignty over their land, resources, culture and language. They demand the right to live and human dignity. Pashtuns reject the 21st century colonialism in the form of CPEC, which will result in the exploitation of their resources while the benefits will be taken by Punjab and China. Pashtuns want to be equal partners in CPEC and want control over their resources through re-negotiated contract in the transparent and open negotiations. They have serious concerns about the arrival of China in the region and the way the contracts have been signed between Pakistan and China without the consent of the Pashtuns. The situation has been further complicated due to arrival of China as a strong strategic partner of Pakistan by launching the CPEC project. Due to CPEC, Pakistan with active connivance of China is bent upon the worst kind of oppression

on both Balochs and Pashtuns. It is really ironic to note that the local populations especially the Balochs and Pashtuns who are supposed to be the main beneficiaries and stakeholders in this project, are deprived of the very basic amenities like clean drinking water, food, electricity, gas and jobs for survival.

On the contrary, the areas through which this gigantic and controversial project passes through, are subject to worst kind of oppression and state terrorism by the Pakistani regime. CPEC is being constructed on the dead bodies of Balochs and Pashtuns while the economic benefits are reaped by a majority ethnic group of Punjabis in Pakistan.

The main stakeholders like Pashtuns and Balochs who were expecting economic development and the resultant prosperity and social justice were subject to a worst type of state oppression. A war was imposed on them which resulted in grave human rights violations and crimes against humanity. A relentless and systematic campaign of abductions, arbitrary detentions, torture and extra-judicial killings of Balochs and Pashtuns is underway. The Pashtuns and Balochs are labelled as terrorists and the international community is made to accept this false Pakistani narrative without any verification and investigation. The Balochs and Pashtuns never got any opportunity to present their side of story to the international community.

As Balochs are suffering right after the creation of Pakistan, they have been active politically and diplomatically to present their case to the international community through different channels. The Pashtuns have never been exposed to such high scale state oppression, death and racial profiling in the history of Pakistan. So, at this crucial juncture they are in need of help from other friendly nations like Afghanistan and oppressed people like Balochs to master the art of politics and diplomacy.

The state atrocities in Balochistan are known to the world for quite a long time but the phenomenon of state oppression of Pashtuns is quite recent. Pashtuns are labelled as terrorists, though they are victims of state terrorism.

### DURAND LINE

Pashtuns on both side of Afghanistan and Pakistan never accepted the Durand line carved out by the British Motimar Durand in 1889 to use the area as buffer between the British empire and the Russians. Revisiting the Durand Line is the only solution to the complex problems of Pashtuns in

Pakistan. The recent decision of Pakistan to annex FATA into Pakistan is the result of pressure from *Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement* (PTM) for the rights of Pashtuns and the long-standing demand of China to loot and plunder its resources and use it as a gateway to Central Asia.

### FATA MERGER INTO KPK

The merger of FATA into KPK in haste also shows that Pakistan has paved the way for China to plunder its natural resources and use it as a gateway to reach Central Asia. FATA was a disputed territory between Afghanistan and the British Empire and its fate cannot be decided unilaterally without consulting Afghanistan. The people of FATA have risen against this merger with KPK and want Pakistan to listen to them. FATA with its 30,000 kms of land and 15 million population and vast natural resources wants to decide its own destiny. The people of FATA are ready to knock at every door including international organisations to preserve the international agreements signed. Afghanistan is a party to this dispute.

### ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES, TORTURE AND EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS

The UN Declaration on protection of all persons from enforced disappearances, states that any act of Enforced Disappearances is an offence to Human Dignity. According to PTM, about 75,000 innocent Pashtuns have been killed, 32,000 are missing and 2.5 million people have been internally displaced in the so-called war on terrorism. 1,200 notables were killed for opposing the occupation of Tribal Areas by the Taliban and Pakistan army. Every educated and liberal Pashtun is the target of Pakistan Army and its proxies the Taliban. The disappeared persons are in 17 known and several unknown Internment Centres spread all over Pakistan, where they are humiliated and tortured. Most of them are suffering from psychological and mental problems. The missing persons who have been released recently are suffering from psychological problems. Independent observers believe that most of the missing persons have been killed and dumped in mass-graves. Pashtuns don't trust Pakistan Army, the Pakistan government, the judiciary and its Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP).

In March 2011 a Commission of Enquiry on Enforced disappearances

was established to look into the problem of mission persons. According to recently published finding of the Commission 4,804 cases of missing persons were investigated in which 3,274 Cases were treated and 1,710 cases are still pending. Most of the missing persons are Pashtuns. It is ironic to note that the 3,274 cases treated does not mean that these persons have been released or presented before the courts, but it means that these missing persons have been detected.

The head of this Commission Justice Javed Iqbal threw a bombshell when he revealed before a Parliamentary Committee that more than 4,000 missing persons have been sold by President Musharaf regime to foreign countries for dollars. This statement un-masked the lies of Pakistani institutions including judiciary. Thus there are more than 8,000 persons missing rather than 4,804 as mentioned in the report of the Commission.

How can such gross human rights violations can happen in a society which claims to be a civilised society where the rule of law and supremacy of the constitution prevails. The said Commission not only failed to fix the responsibility on individuals and organisations, but it also did not file reports against named individuals responsible directly or indirectly for these disappearances.

### **THE EMERGENCE OF PASHTUN TAHAFFUZ MOVEMENT (PTM)**

*Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement* (PTM), in English called Pashtun Protection Movement emerged on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line where for the first time the Pashtun youth under the leadership of Manzoor Pashteen started a non-violent struggle popularly known as PASHTUN SPRING against the military establishment of Pakistan.

It was for the first time in the history of Pashtuns living in Pakistan, that PTM organised a peaceful non-violent protest on February 10, 2018 in Islamabad against the state atrocities, abductions, arbitrary detentions, torture and extra-judicial killing of Pashtuns. Just like Arab Spring, the Pashtun Spring fuelled mainly by social media, particularly *Pashtun Times* shook the very foundations of the state of Pakistan and the fear of the state evaporated in the air.

Consequently, Pashtuns took to the streets in hundreds and thousands all across Pakistan from Peshawar to Karachi and Quetta to Swat to seek justice under the charismatic leadership of Manzoor Pashteen, Ali Wazir, Mohsin Dawar and Said Alam Mahsood. This grassroots indigenous movement is supported by young students, teachers,

journalists, doctors, intellectuals, professors and human rights activists. It is secular in character and has brought a fundamental social change in the conservative Pashtun patriarchal tribal society by giving equal opportunity to women to participate in its gatherings and important meetings.

Manzoor Pashteen, the 26 years old charismatic leader hailing from Waziristan, a tribal agency in south of KPK, is the architect of this movement. Pashteen launched this Movement in 2014 along with his 26 die-hard friends to raise their voice against human rights violations and the social, economic and political injustices meted out to Pashtuns in the last four decades by the state of Pakistan in two phases – first in 1980s by arming and training *Mujahideen* against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, and then after 9/11 in the so-called war on terror. Both Pashtuns and U.S. were deceived and tricked by Pakistani military establishment, using Pashtuns as cannon fodder for war on terror while securing 33 billion dollars from US. These young leaders of PTM have grown up in war and are eye witness to the horrors of state sponsored terrorism and oppression. They know every detail of what happened with Pashtuns and Pakistani institutions are responsible for all their sufferings. They also know how to resolve the problem. These young men have blown away the wrong narrative of Pakistan's war on terror, based on lies and deceit. *Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement* (PTM), worked without any formal organisational structure for some time but now it is in the process of organising its national, regional and International cadres. Contrary to Pashtun's age old oral tradition, PTM recorded in detail and shared through social media the deep pain of humiliation of Pashtuns, the agonies of war, displacements, abductions, torture, disappearances and killings both by military and its proxies like the Taliban.

### **The Role of Media, Civil Society and Army**

According to PTM an estimated 32,000 cases of enforced disappearances have been reported, while as 8,000 cases of missing persons have been confirmed. Around 1,000 missing persons have been released since the launch of the Movement. The success of the Movement can be gauged from the fact that it forced the powerful Military to release innocent Pashtuns from its detention Centres. PTM has become a symbol of Pashtun dignity and sovereignty. Pashtuns have reposed their confidence and hope in this movement.

Why Pashtuns trust PTM? The answer is simple and clear; PTM is an

indigenous grassroots level movement whose argument is based on primary data collected from areas which suffered most from the war on terrorism. To many independent observers the figures presented by PTM are astronomical. Many ask as to Why Pashtuns did not report these cases of missing persons to the Pakistani media ? The response is simple. The Pakistani media is denied access to these war affected areas. In most cases, media self-censored themselves due to fear. After the launch of the PTM in February 2018, media received strict orders from the Pak Military not to report their protest rallies and demonstrations. The mainstream Pakistani media blackout clearly indicates that it is an accomplice in the fake narrative of the military to counter terrorism. Boycotting this non-violent civil rights movement means that media is on the side of oppression and tyranny. It seems to be even worse as the Pakistani media has started a co-ordinated propaganda campaign against PTM to discredit it among the masses. The systematic anti-Pashtun narrative and constant attacks on Pashtuns show that media has been responsible for propagating the lies of the Pakistan military on war on terror and labelling Pashtuns as uncivilised, savage and warriors who support terrorism in the region. An EU based Mashal Radio which was reporting on the Pashtun miseries was banned by Pakistan. To counter this fake narrative of Pakistani media and generals, the peaceful Pashtuns have had no option but to boycott Pakistani media and strive to create their own. Secondly, the families of the disappeared persons are threatened by Pakistan military, ISI and military intelligence not to report the cases of their missing persons ; otherwise other members of their families would face the same fate.

Thirdly, Pashtuns don't believe anymore in the civilian government as it is criminally abetting the military establishment in these gross human rights violations. The most important factor leading to reporting the cases of missing persons was the emergence of a credible young Pashtun leadership of PTM whom the Pashtuns trust.

According to PTM, about 75,000 innocent Pashtuns have been killed, 32,000 are missing and 2.5 million have been internally displaced in the so-called war on terrorism. Not a single Taliban or Al-Qaeda leader was killed by Pakistani Military in these operations. Manzoor Pashteen says that since 9/11, 87 Taliban and Al Qaeda terrorists were killed, 86 were killed by U.S. drones and one named Abdullah Mahsood (brother of a serving major in Pakistani military) blew himself in a suicide attack. Only civilian population and cities were targeted in the fake operations to get 33 billion dollars from the US.

According to a retired General Mr. Qamar Sulaiman who headed the Air-force operations, “11,600 bombs were dropped on FATA in 2008 only.” Pashtuns want to know as to who was the target of military jets like F-16, gunship helicopters and artillery shells used in FATA by the Pakistani Army? If Al-Qaida and Taliban were not the target then who was the target of military operations in Pashtun dominated areas? It is clear that innocent Pashtuns were slaughtered, their homes and properties destroyed, their businesses crumbled and a systematic campaign of humiliation and torture was unleashed at military checkpoints set up on almost every kilometer. It seems that the war on terror was actually war against Pashtuns. According to a prominent Pashtun leader Afrasiab Khattack, “the anger in Pashtun dominated areas in Pakistan is like a volcano which may explode and result in rebellion if capped with force”.

Ironically, despite dozens of check posts in FATA, the Taliban entered the cities of Bannu and Derra Ismail Khan without any resistance from the Army, broke into two prisons situated in heavily armed military garrisons and went away without any resistance with hundreds of their comrades. The Taliban are living lavish lives in military cantonments and are given protocol at check points while ordinary citizens are subject to worst type of humiliation and disgrace by the state institutions. Their dignity and honor is trampled on daily basis. Peace deals were made with the Taliban and excessive use of force was used against innocent people. Taliban are trained, provided with logistical support and financed by the Pakistan army.

According to a retired General Safdar, a Taliban commander Nek Mohammed was paid Rs.170 million by Pakistan Army in a deal. Monzoor Pashteen is on record that he himself saw a notorious Taliban Commander Khannan in Bannu Cantonment Area as guest of Pakistan Army. Ehsanullah Ehsan, a Taliban spokesman is a royal guest of the Army at Rawalpindi, headquarters of Pak Army.

### **Attack on Army Public School (APC)**

Yet, another shocking revelation for Pashtuns was the pre-planned attack on Army Public School, Peshawar which resulted in killing of 144 and injuring of over 200 students. The students and their parents believe that the attack was engineered by the Pakistan Army to use it as an excuse to start military operations in FATA to get foothold and construct army garrisons in these tribal areas. The school was situated in heavily protected Army Garrison area. Not a single army personnel was injured or killed in

this operation. An army cammando who participated in this attack told media recently that this operation was organised and financed by Pakistan Army along with the Taliban. An army officer on duty told media that he was in contact with his son inside the school on mobile crying for help but the Army personnel at the entrance door did not allow him to enter to save his child.

Even the Taliban, involved in the terrorist attack told media that they were forced to kill some children when Army violated the preplanned agreement by attacking them ; but most of the children were killed by Army later. Fazal Advocate a human rights defender whose son was killed in the attack blamed army for the attack and demanded the establishment of Judicial Commission to inquire about the role of Army in this massacre. Enayat Khan Pashteen who was hanged for APC attack was reported in 2010 as disappeared by Pakistan Army from his hometown. The question arises as to how a person disappeared by Army personnel in 2010 can attack a school in 2014. The military involvement of Pak is further proved by the fact that Ehsanullah Ehsan, a Taliban spokesman who accepted the killing of APC children is now a VIP guest of the Pakistan Army. All these facts show the double standards of the military establishment, which is responsible for the genocide of Pashtuns. This massacre was used as an excuse to occupy FATA. Subsequently, Parliament of Pakistan was forced to pass an amendment for the merger of FATA with KPK without the consent of local tribesmen.

These are important questions which need to be answered. Pashtuns don't trust Pakistan Army, the Pakistani government, the judiciary and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). This author has been witness to the agonies and humiliations suffered by Pashtuns. Pashtuns know very well how the Pakistan Army installed the Taliban in FATA. At first the tribesmen were disarmed then they were told not to resist the Taliban who were deployed in camps all around FATA and provided with training, arms and finances. The tribesmen were first killed by these Taliban and then humiliated, abducted, tortured and killed by the Pakistan Army.

Ali Wazir, another prominent leader of the Movement lost 13 members of his family. His house and commercial properties were razed to ground in the so-called war on terror. His only fault was that he and his father were against the Taliban deployment in Waziristan by the Pakistan Army.

### **Main demands of PTM**

1. Pashtuns want their basic right to life and live with dignity.
2. Pashtuns want peace in their region and request the Pakistan army to stop fake operations and stop supporting the Taliban.
3. Stop enforced disappearances, abductions, torture and killings of Pashtuns.
4. De-mine the FATA region to protect the ordinary civilians including children and women from being injured and killed.
5. Arrest and try in courts a police officer Rao Anwar who killed Naqebullah Mahsood and more than 400 persons in extra-judicial encounters.
6. Release or present before the courts all the missing persons.
7. Stop humiliation and torture of civilians at military check-posts in FATA.
8. Establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate the enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings of Pashtuns in Pakistan.
9. Stop the leasing of our land and resources by Pakistan to be looted and plundered by China, for implementation of its economic and strategic designs in the region.
10. The forced accession of Pashtun's land to Pakistan was in violation of the decision and mandate of the people, through fraud referendum which was boycotted by the true representatives of Pashtun people and thus was an act of historical injustice to be revisited.
11. Correct the historical injustice done to the Pashtun nation by re-visiting the Durand Line which divides the Pashtun people and is one of the main cause of instability and insecurity in Afghanistan and the whole region.
12. Demand the installation of UN Peace Keeping Force in Ex-FATA, now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to protect Pashtuns from the Taliban and Pak Army.

Pashtuns request the UN Human Rights Council, Working Group on Enforcement Disappearances, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International to investigate the cases of Pashtun missing persons. They urge the government of Pakistan to stop these atrocities and bring the culprits to justice. They demand the government of Pakistan to present the missing persons, languishing in detention centres before the courts.

They demand the protection of the leaders and all workers of the *Pashtun Protection Movement*. As evidence shows some unscrupulous state proxies including the Taliban or even Pakistan Army are bent on harming or killing them which will plunge the country into chaos.

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FOREIGN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN  
AFGHANISTAN, 2001-18  
*A CRITICAL ANALYSIS*

NAZIR AHMAD YOSUFI

OVERVIEW

Afghanistan is a landlocked country. It is located in the 'heart of Asia' and, apart from various ethnic groups, over thirty languages and two hundred dialects are spoken in the country. It connects the re-emerging economic giants such as China and India with the Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Russia. It has been a crossroad for trade, commercial exchanges, civilizations, etc. for centuries. After the defeat of the British empire in 1919, King Amanullah Khan modernized the economy of Afghanistan by introducing tax collection system. During that time, around 60 per cent of the domestic revenues were coming from agricultural products. However, in the 1950s because of the plummeting domestic revenues, the country could not finance its needs and faced fiscal deficit. Therefore, during the 1960s, the government sought foreign assistance from major donors, particularly in education and infrastructure sectors. In response, during the 1960s and 70s, many roads in Afghanistan were built with financial assistance from the Soviet Union and the United States (US)<sup>1</sup>. For example, the Kabul-Kandahar-Herat road constructed in the 1960s was funded by the Soviet Union and the US<sup>2</sup>. During the same period, Germany stood the third largest donor to Afghanistan after the Soviets and the US<sup>3</sup>. It constructed Amani High School and also executed numerous projects related to healthcare, geological survey, agriculture and trade enhancement, etc<sup>4</sup>. India also contributed in different sectors particularly in healthcare such as the construction of Indira Gandhi

Children's Hospital in Kabul in 1966<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, the French government constructed two Franco-Afghan schools (Malalai and Estiqlal high schools) in 1974. Thus, foreign aid played an important role during the 1960s and 70s in building new infrastructure in Afghanistan<sup>6</sup>.

However, major infrastructure projects such as the construction of roads, buildings, cinemas, etc. were completed during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 until the withdrawal of its forces in 1989 by investing around \$45 billion in Afghanistan<sup>7</sup>. Nonetheless, the Cold War rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union inflicted destruction upon Afghanistan. Since then, due to the proxy wars between the erstwhile superpowers, the country has faced enormous political and economic problems<sup>8</sup>. Unfortunately, the international development assistance for Afghanistan declined significantly after the dissolution of USSR. Further, the 1990s were marked by aid fatigue. The international donors thought that foreign assistance was creating aid dependency relationship with developing countries<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, the international donors sidelined Afghanistan and thereafter it faced significant political, security and economic problems. However, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO)<sup>10</sup>, delivered € 725.5 million in humanitarian assistance to people affected by conflicts in Afghanistan during the 1990s<sup>11</sup>. It was emergency assistance in the areas of health, shelter, water, sanitation and food services, and also education<sup>12</sup>. Further, international humanitarian assistance declined with the emergence of the Taliban in 1994 because it was difficult for various agencies to reach the intended beneficiaries such as women and children in Afghanistan. In 2001, the US with its allies, started the 'war on terror' and ousted the Taliban. Since then, Afghanistan became the centre of attention for the international community.

### THE BONN AGREEMENT

After the collapse of the Taliban regime, Germany took the initiative and invited various Afghan factions (except Taliban) to the 'Bonn Conference'. The conference was convened under the supervision of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) to map the future of Afghanistan<sup>13</sup>. The UN, US, Russia and other external powers played a significant role in persuading the participants such as Afghan military commanders, various ethnic groups and the exiled monarch representatives to come to an agreement and make the interim

government. After negotiations for nine days, the agreement was signed on December 5, 2001 and Hamid Karzai was selected as the Afghan Interim government leader. Subsequently, the UN agreed and established International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)-a multi-national peacekeeping force on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2001 by Resolution 1386, initially led by Britain. Afterwards, the *Loya Jirga*<sup>14</sup> approved the decision of the Bonn Conference on 19 June 2002. Eventually, in the Presidential elections of 2004 and 2009, Hamid Karzai was elected the President for five years, respectively<sup>15</sup>.

The Bonn agreement sought to wind-up the decades of war and conflict, promote peace, initiate national reconciliation, create stability and respect for human rights in Afghanistan. At this conference, the international community reaffirmed Afghanistan's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and also acknowledged the right of the Afghan people to freely determine their own political future in accordance with the principles of Islam, democracy, pluralism and social justice<sup>16</sup>. This agreement laid the foundation for the establishment of the interim government, a new constitution, free and fair elections, and security.

Since then, the international community has stood firmly with the people of Afghanistan providing development assistance for the security and reconstruction of the country. Different countries took the lead in various areas. For instance, the US was responsible for the Afghan National Army (ANA), Germany for training the Afghan National Police (ANP), the United Kingdom (UK) for counter-narcotics, Italy for reforming the Afghan justice system, and Japan for disarmament and reintegration of illegally armed groups<sup>17</sup>. Initially, when the UN refused to be the aid coordinator, it was not seen necessary because there were no overlapping projects. However, the problem of overriding started later among the donors and eventually increased the ineffectiveness of the aid<sup>18</sup>. Despite problems, the international community assisted Afghanistan in establishing the ANA, ANP, building government institutions, reconstructing roads, schools, hospitals, and also helped the country to have a legitimate government recognizable by the entire world. The German government hosted the Bonn follow up conference on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011 for evaluating the last one decade's achievements. In this conference, most countries reaffirmed their continuous support from Transition to the Transformation Decade 2015-24. Importantly, the international community promised to direct their financial support towards Afghanistan's economic

development, particularly, the areas of agriculture, mining, expanding trade networks, etc.

### THE US DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: PRIORITIES, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES

The US interest in Afghanistan did not end after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces in 1989. However, it did not provide economic or humanitarian aid to Afghanistan throughout the 1990s. Because, the US wanted to keep Afghanistan as fragile as possible to make its comeback easier and meantime to use Taliban against Iran, besides, keeping an eye on China and India and preventing them from having connectivity and access to the Central Asian Republics energy sources. But, after the 9/11 incidents, the US transformed its foreign policy as well as national security priorities and utilized the opportunity to enter Afghanistan<sup>19</sup>. Now the War on Terror was at the centre of the foreign policy of George W. Bush<sup>20</sup>.

When Barak Obama, the successor of President Bush, assumed office in 2009, the US economy was in bad shape firstly due to the economic crisis of 2008/9 and, secondly, the Bush government had spent a lot of money in Afghanistan as well as in the Iraq war. Thus, unlike the Bush administration, Obama came with a more liberal foreign policy focusing on economic recovery rather than security. His strategy was known as 'kill and withdraw'. After the US forces killed Osama Bin Laden on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011, in Abbottabad, Pakistan, President Obama declared the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, and shutdown of the Guantanamo Bay. As a result, the US recalled its forces from Iraq, home by the end of December 2011. But, it neither closed the Guantanamo prison nor withdrew from Afghanistan. Contrarily, the Obama government asked President Karzai to sign the US-Afghan Security Pact in 2013 to allow 9,800 US and 12,000 troops of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) until 2024 and beyond<sup>21</sup>. Hamid Karzai refused to sign the US-Afghan Security Pact, saying that the US did not keep previous commitments to protect the country and support the peace process<sup>22</sup>. However, when President Ghani came to power, the US-Afghan Security pact was immediately signed in September 2014. It was criticized by Hamid Karzai and some Afghan opposition groups.

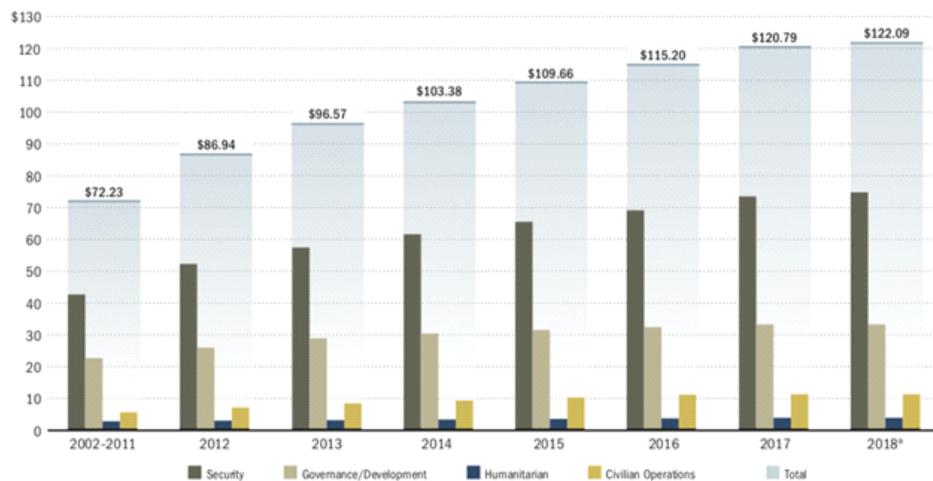
In 2016, Donald Trump, during his election campaign, announced that "he would pull out all the American troops from Afghanistan and Syria once he comes to power". After becoming President, he came up

with the new strategy for South Asia focusing on Afghanistan, on 21 August 2017. According to him, the previous US administrations' policies failed because these were time based approaches. He said, "the South Asia Strategy is not a time based approach rather a condition based approach". Further, he said, "Pakistan had given us nothing but lies and deceit in return for \$33 billion aid. It provided safe havens to the terrorists that we hunt in Afghanistan". He also said, "The US will continue its war in Afghanistan and will target the safe havens of terrorism in South Asia (pointing to Pakistan) to stop the resurgence of terrorists from threatening America". Afghanistan and many counties in the region welcomed the new US policy, but it met with a strong reaction from Pakistan<sup>23</sup>.

### The US Development Assistance in Different Sectors

The US provided more than \$100 billion to Afghanistan since 2001 and it is the largest contributor of development aid to Afghanistan<sup>24</sup>.

FIGURE 1: SECTOR WISE DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (\$ BILLIONS)

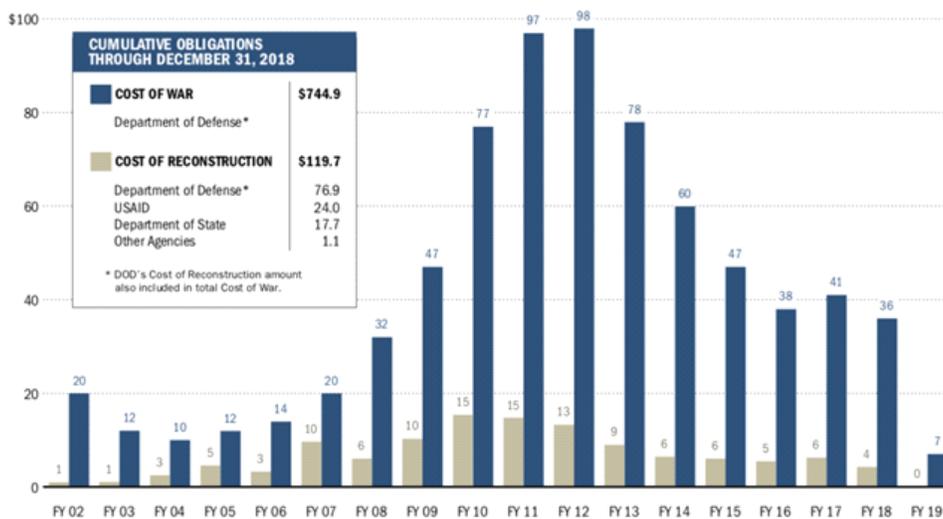


Source: SIGAR Report, 2018. p 64.

As seen in figure 1, The US aid was largely used for military, police training, equipment, salaries of the security forces, counter narcotics operations and making prisons<sup>25</sup>. Between 2003 to 2013, the US spent \$45 billion for financing the ANA, ANP, around 40 per cent of aid was spent on purchasing equipment and \$7.55 billion was used for counter narcotics<sup>26</sup>. The US defence department has utilized more than \$66 billion of US funds, around \$18 billion has been channelled through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and \$10 billion

has been provided to the International Trust Funds such as Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA)<sup>27</sup>. An additional \$7.7 billion has been submitted to Afghan government agencies directly<sup>28</sup>. Approximately, 70 per cent of US funds were used to support the Afghan forces and police, including, policing and combating the narcotics. The remaining 30 per cent of funds were used for the projects related to governance and development. These projects included programmes to strengthen the prisons and local justice system of courts, expand power generation and transmission lines, road reconstruction, provide basic education, literacy and technical vocational training and education, etc.

**FIGURE 2: THE US EXPENDITURE ON WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN (IN BILLIONS)**



Source: SIGAR Report, 2018. p 54.

As seen in figure 2, the war in Afghanistan is the costliest and longest war in the history of the US. However, in the light of the dual policy of Pakistan in fighting terrorism since 2001, the US continuously provided aid to Pakistan. For instance, the US did not take action against Pakistan when Osama Bin Laden was arrested in Pakistan in 2011. In fact, for the past 18 years of war on terror, the US did not try in a real sense to destroy the safe havens of terrorism in Pakistan or Afghanistan.

Further, after the failure of 2017 South Asian Strategy, the US came

with a new strategy in 2018, to bring the Taliban back to power in Afghanistan within six months and appointed Zalmay Khalilzad as special US representative to talk to the Taliban. Furthermore, the US is directly negotiating the peace deal with the Taliban and its allies such as Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia without the involvement of the Afghan government. First of all, it is not possible in such a short period of time, to bring peace in Afghanistan. Secondly, how is it possible to bring peace without involving the Afghan government in the peace processes. Indeed, one can understand that the US never entered Afghanistan with the intention of bringing peace and stability. In fact, the US wanted to keep Afghanistan in turmoil, thus preventing the re-emerging Asian powers from regional connectivity and access to resources of Central Asian Republics (CARs).

### THE EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN AFGHANISTAN

European Union (EU) is one of the most important actors in the global aid architecture both in terms of aid volume and development partnerships<sup>29</sup>. The EU alongwith its Member States (MS) is the largest donor of Official Development Assistance (ODA)<sup>30</sup>. According to the European Commission, the EU and its Member States (MS) contribute more than half of the ODA every year. In the year 2013, it contributed € 56.5 billion (52% of total ODA) to the developing countries worldwide and more than two-thirds of total aid was in the form of grants<sup>31</sup>. Since 2001, around half of its development aid has been directed towards fragile countries for promoting peace and state building. After 9/11, Afghanistan became the priority of the EU and its MS, and garnered billions of Euros for different sectors.

As seen in table-1, the EU alone has provided around € 4 billion to Afghanistan from 2002 to 2016<sup>32</sup>. The EU became an important donor for Afghanistan after the breakdown of the Taliban regime in 2001. However, nearly 70 per cent of the total assistance delivered to Afghanistan by the EU and European Commission (EC) was off budget<sup>33</sup>.

The EU became the second largest donor in the area of humanitarian and economic assistance and strongly supported regional cooperation. The EU was also engaged in the military and civilian operations such as European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL 2007) aimed at peacekeeping, security reform, judicial reform, rule of law, the establishment of good governance and border monitoring. The EU created

TABLE 1: EU DEVELOPMENT AID TO AFGHANISTAN FROM 2002- 2016  
(IN € MILLION)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Commitments</i>	<i>Disbursements</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Commitments</i>	<i>Disbursements</i>
2002	247.59	151.04	2010	254.61	215.20
2003	285.55	213.90	2011	347.00	261.41
2004	247.55	171.19	2012	283.61	199.63
2005	224.48	206.11	2013	316.86	188.41
2006	200.53	175.98	2014	297.90	270.50
2007	195.90	224.59	2015	275.00	173.00
2008	214.49	213.27	2016	362.00	268.00
2009	269.83	285.65	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,022.90</b>	<b>3,217.88</b>

Source: European Commission, 2018

an Overseas Development Assistance Policy to promote coordination amongst the donors in order to improve the overall aid effectiveness. In 2014, the EU added Afghanistan to its Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), by which Afghanistan can export anything to the EU without tariffs except for arms and ammunition<sup>34</sup>.

As per the EU-Afghanistan Country Strategy Paper, “the EU has focused on three focal areas such as rural development, health and social protection, public administration reform and infrastructure and three non-focal areas such as de-mining, regional cooperation, refugees/returnees and counter narcotics cooperation”<sup>35</sup>. Since 2001, the EU has invested “€ 321 million in agriculture development, € 224.33 million in rural development such as water and natural resources management, animal health, seeds, horticulture, and development of rural communities”<sup>36</sup>. It has provided € 421 million for the health sector of Afghanistan<sup>37</sup>. Since 2002, the EU has invested € 510 million in promoting and developing the ANP. The European community provided more than € 10 million to the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The EU and Afghanistan signed a Multilateral Indicative Programme (MIP) during Karzai government for seven year (2014 to 2020) where the EU committed to provide € 200 million per year to Afghan government<sup>38</sup>. However, this amount was increased to € 300 million per year during President Ghani’s visit to Brussels in 2016. The purpose of EU’s increased aid for Afghanistan is to stop the Afghan refugees from entering Europe.

### **EU-Afghanistan Relations after 2014**

When Karzai's successor, President Ashraf Ghani assumed office in 2014, the country was in a lousy situation both in terms of security and economy. On the one hand, the international forces were withdrawing from Afghanistan and on the other hand *Daesh* (Islamic State in Afghanistan) was emerging in the country. Further, the Taliban refused peace talks with the Afghan government and captured Kunduz province in 2015. The violence was at its peak in the country during this period. As a result, the Afghan people lost their hope in the government and many started migrating to other countries, mainly to the European countries. After the announcement of *Wir Schafen Das*<sup>39</sup> by Angela Merkel many more people moved to Germany.

In 2015, the Afghan refugees seeking asylum in Europe, mainly Germany, reached 180,000, which formed the second highest number of refugees after the Syrians<sup>40</sup>. In this regard, the EU and Ashraf Ghani signed an agreement "Joint Way Forward on Migration Issue" on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2016 for cooperation in sending back the irregular migrants to Afghanistan and also to find out the root causes of migration and to improve migration management<sup>41</sup>. In the same month, the EU hosted a conference on Afghanistan in Brussels on 4-5 October 2016. This summit raised \$15.2 billion from the world donors, where the EU and MS contributed \$5.6 billion out of the total aid for Afghanistan for the period 2016-2020<sup>42</sup>.

Mr Neven Mimica, the European Commissioner for International Development said, "Now is not the time to reduce our ambition or our investment in the people of Afghanistan". The EU aid increased from € 200 to € 300 million per year. On 17 February 2017, the EU and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan signed Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD)<sup>43</sup>. The EU-Afghanistan relations are based on this new framework which lays emphasis on mutually beneficial relationship for a wide range of sectors like: "economy, the rule of law, health, rural development, education, science and technology, and actions to combat corruption, money laundering, terrorist financing, organized crime and narcotics"<sup>44</sup>. It also foresees "cooperation on migration, based on the Joint Way Forward on Migration issues" which was adopted on 20 October 2016<sup>45</sup>.

### **Contribution of EU Member States to Afghanistan**

During the Bonn Conference in 2001, the EU Member States took

responsibility for different sectors. Germany took charge of ANP training. During the first phase from 2002-2007, it focused on the reopening of the Kabul Police Academy and modernize the training programmes, from which 4,500 ANP officers graduated, and it was handed over to the EU later in 2007<sup>46</sup>. The UK accepted responsibility for fighting narcotics production, border police training and promotion of sustainable livelihood. France was responsible for coordination of international efforts and supported the establishment of the Afghanistan Parliament. It also closely worked with the UN Development Program (UNDP) and the European partners. Italy worked for reforming the Justice system of Afghanistan. Other major projects have been undertaken by different MS such as the Kabul-Jalalabad-Torkham road reconstruction and a traffic safety program for this road by Sweden<sup>47</sup>. The Kabul Electricity Rehabilitation project was funded by Germany and the Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) co-funded by Finland and Sweden<sup>48</sup>. Other MS have also made substantial contributions to security, provided around half of the ISAF personnel, and participated in the PRTs. At the same time, there was significant degree of overlapping goals between the European Commission and the MS.

TABLE 2: THE EU/EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AID TO AFGHANISTAN FROM 2002-2010 (IN \$ MILLION)

<i>Donor Countries/Institutions</i>	<i>Commitments</i>	<i>Disbursements</i>
European Union and European Commission	2,883	2,594
United Kingdom	2,222	2,222
Netherlands	1,015	1,015
Germany	2,130	762
Sweden	635	635
Italy	645	540
Denmark	438	438
Spain	220	194
France	323	174
Finland	160	160
Total	10,671	8,734

Source: Nematullah Bizhan, *Aid Paradoxes in Afghanistan: Building and Undermining the State*, 2018. pp 84-85.

As seen in table 2, the European countries committed to provide more than \$10 billion to Afghanistan by 2010. But the disbursement was \$2 billion, less than what was committed at the beginning. However, because of tangible transformative policies, the European development assistance has a positive connotation among the Afghans, who recognize and value European commitments. Although, every aspect is not foolproof because the exasperating issue has been of accountability which has been raised by the Afghan government in various forums. Since 2015, the EU and MS have been concerned about the influx of Afghan refugees, *Daesh* and the smuggling of Afghan drugs into Europe.

### DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FROM JAPAN

The relations between Afghanistan and Japan have been friendly through history. Japan is one of the notable contributors of development assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan<sup>49</sup>. During the Bonn conference in 2001, Japan took the responsibility for “Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), and Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) in Afghanistan”<sup>50</sup>. Japan has provided development aid to Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) for vocational training of those fighters that joined DDR and also development projects for job creation and reintegration of anti-government elements into the society<sup>51</sup>. By 2006, Japan disarmed 60,000 ex-combatants, disbanded 737 illegal armed groups and collected around 2,76,000 weapons<sup>52</sup>.

In 2011, The Afghanistan government and its people expressed their deep sorrow and sympathy with the people of Japan for the catastrophic earthquake and Tsunami of 2011, and the government of Afghanistan provided one million dollars from its national revenues as assistance to the people of Japan<sup>53</sup>. In the Tokyo Conference held in 2012, Japan announced three billion dollars assistance to Afghanistan for the next five years in the areas such as “socio-economic development and enhancement of security capabilities”<sup>54</sup>. Its focus was on the priority areas of Afghanistan’s development strategy like- agriculture, infrastructure and human resource development<sup>55</sup>.

Japan has a specific focus on the agricultural sector of Afghanistan and Japan believes that agriculture sector provides over 70 per cent of employment to the Afghan people and contributes 30 per cent of Afghanistan’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Japan has provided \$18.5 million grant from Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) Programme,

for funding the agricultural projects in Afghanistan<sup>56</sup>. This fund was administered by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and it built over 1,700 repositories for potato and onion for the farmers in Bamyan, Kabul and Panjsher<sup>57</sup>. Moreover, it has provided the modern farming practices to ten thousand farmers and also supplied new types of machines for the production of high quality oil in Mazar-e-Sharif and Jalalabad provinces<sup>58</sup>. Besides, Japan continued its support for the development of Kabul New City (including Dehsabz area) and the Kabul International Airport. Similarly, Japan supported the infrastructure projects for enhancement of Afghanistan's connectivity with five neighboring countries which are important for medium and long-term growth and stability of the country. Furthermore, Japan focused on the development of human resources (education and health sectors), considering it as the base for the future economic development of Afghanistan. Most importantly in the 2012 Tokyo Conference, the donors' community and the Afghan government established the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) for the implementation of Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), fighting corruption, making efforts to improve aid effectiveness and regular review of the progress<sup>59</sup>.

Post-2014, the national unity government has been working on the challenges and it developed a comprehensive reform agenda<sup>60</sup>. In 2012, Japan signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Kabul on six economic projects: "rehabilitation and expansion of the Kabul Airport aircraft parking, expansion of the current Bamyan airport, improvement of east-west connecting roads in North Kabul, improvement of Kabul University and development of small irrigation systems in the suburb of Kabul"<sup>61</sup>. In 2013, Japan provided "\$13.3 million in grant assistance for the rehabilitation of community infrastructure in Nangarhar province"<sup>62</sup>. Further, Japan committed to assist the Afghan government for capacity building of the ANP and payment of their salaries through LOTFA. It is the largest donor to LOTFA among all the countries and institutions.

### DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FROM INDIA

Afghanistan has had long historical and cultural ties with India and its people. The Treaty of Friendship between the Royal government of Afghanistan and India was signed on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1950<sup>63</sup>. Since then, India has been engaged in helping Afghanistan. In 1990, both countries signed the Indo-Afghan Protocol in the areas of agriculture, telecommunication

and commodity<sup>64</sup>. In 1966, India established the 'Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health' in Kabul with 150 beds which has now been upgraded to 350 beds and equipped with latest technologies and linked with the Indian healthcare institutes<sup>65</sup>. From the 1990s to 2001, the Indian government provided millions of dollars in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan through UN agencies, besides providing intelligence and military support to the Afghan government<sup>66</sup>. This unique friendship between the two nations further resulted in the signing of the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) on 4 October 2011<sup>67</sup>.

Today, India is the fifth largest bilateral donor of development assistance to Afghanistan after the US, UK, Japan and Germany<sup>68</sup>. India provides the largest amount of its assistance to Afghanistan after Bhutan<sup>69</sup>. It has been providing development aid to Afghanistan in various sectors such as education, healthcare, social welfare, infrastructure projects, training to ANP, politicians and diplomats<sup>70</sup>. India has committed nearly three billion dollars in development assistance to Afghanistan; over \$2 billion have been disbursed<sup>71</sup>. Such a strong relationship between Afghanistan and India is based on shared interests: firstly, to prevent the Taliban and the establishment of anti-India camps in Afghanistan<sup>72</sup>. Secondly, India wants to have access to the resources and expand business with Afghanistan and also to have overland access to the CARs<sup>73</sup>.

India has played a very constructive role in Afghanistan. Since 2001, more than 60,000 students have received their higher education degrees and many more attended short term courses and training in India. In 2003, a Preferential Trade Agreement was signed between India and Afghanistan which provided substantial tariff concessions from 50 to 100 per cent on (38 items) of Afghan dry fruits<sup>74</sup>. Similarly, the Afghan government provided reciprocal concessions to Indian products such as tea, sugar, cement, pharmaceuticals, etc. In 2007, India supported Afghanistan in joining the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) during the 14<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit held in New Delhi<sup>75</sup>. The SAARC membership opened new opportunities and possibilities for Afghanistan to become a trade, transport and energy crossroad by linking the South Asian countries with the CARs and beyond. It is worth mentioning that India is the first country in the region to have a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with Afghanistan<sup>76</sup>. The SPA was signed by former president Hamid Karzai and Dr. Manmohan Singh in 2011, which reinforced the relationship and cooperation in "political and security cooperation, trade and economic cooperation, capacity building and

education, social and cultural, civil society and people-to-people contacts<sup>77</sup>.

Today, India is the most significant regional donor to Afghanistan and it is active in most of the international forums for Afghanistan<sup>78</sup>. India removed basic duties for all least developed countries of SAARC in 2011 during the SAARC Summit in Malé. Since then, trade between Afghanistan and India has increased manifold. In 2013, the former president of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai asked India for more assistance in the security sector but India was reluctant to do so due to strong objections from Pakistan. However, Afghanistan has recently received few helicopters from India.

### **Major Projects undertaken by India in Afghanistan since 2001**

The Indian government helped Afghanistan to expand the national TV and radio networks to 34 provincial capitals in the country in 2003. It also assisted in restoring the telecommunication infrastructure in 11 provinces in 2005<sup>79</sup>. Further, the former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh introduced Small Development Projects Scheme (SDPS) in 2005 during his visit to Kabul<sup>80</sup>. The SDPS is community-based projects which have been implemented in all the provinces in different sectors like-agriculture, education, health, rural development, vocational training and solar energy. These projects have local ownership and management which have a direct impact on community life. Under this scheme, India built basic health clinics in Badakhshan, Balkh, Kandahar, Khost, Kunar, Nangarhar, Nimruz, Nooristan, Paktia, and Paktika.

The Indian government supplied high-protein biscuits everyday to around two million children in 33 provinces excluding Kabul city through humanitarian assistance programme<sup>81</sup>. Further, India reconstructed the Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital and the Habibia High School in Kabul<sup>82</sup>. Besides, the "Indian Medical Missions are providing free medical consultations and medicines to over 30,000 Afghans" in five major cities (Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Mazar-e-Sharif) every month<sup>83</sup>. The Indian government also provided 250,000 metric tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan to meet its food shortage<sup>84</sup>. The construction of 218 km Zaranj to Delaram road was an important initiative by India which linked Afghanistan with the Chabahar Port in Iran. It facilitates wider regional connectivity, provides smooth movement of goods and services between Iran and Afghanistan<sup>85</sup>. It will reduce Afghanistan's dependency on Pakistan for trade route.

Further, in 2009 India constructed 202 km Transmission Line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul and sub-station at Chimtala which brings Uzbekistan's electricity to Kabul city throughout the year<sup>86</sup>. Apart from providing scholarships to the Afghan youth, the Indian government built the Afghan National Agriculture Science and Technology University (ANASTU) in Kandahar Province. Former Indian Foreign Minister, Salman Khurshid and President Karzai inaugurated this national centre on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2014<sup>87</sup>.

India is the only donor which aligned its development projects with the Afghan government and its people requirements since 2001. Understanding the Afghans' need, India has gifted over 1,000 vehicles such as buses, ambulances and utility vehicles to Afghanistan<sup>88</sup>. It is worth mentioning that India's cooperation in the education sector and capacity building has had a multiplier effect in the Afghan society and economy. Since 2001, thousands of Afghan students have participated in Bachelor, Masters, PhD and other professional education programmes in India through Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarships and self-finance. They have returned home with new skills and knowledge to rebuild their war-torn country. The Indian government extended 1,000 annual scholarships for Afghan students to study in Indian universities until 2020<sup>89</sup>. Besides, the ICCR scholarship, there are 614 scholarships provided by Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), and over 500 scholarships for Afghan civil servants annually to receive training in India and vocational training programmes in Afghanistan<sup>90</sup>. Apart from Indian government contributions, some NGOs such as the "Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) established an India-Afghanistan Vocational Training Centre for training Afghan youth in carpentry, plumbing, welding, masonry, and tailoring"<sup>91</sup>. Another prominent Indian NGO Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) executed a programme and established a Women's Vocational Training Centre in Bagh-e-Zanan in Kabul in 2009 to train the Afghan women (war-widows and orphans) in garment making, nursery plantation, food processing and marketing<sup>92</sup>.

After Ashraf Ghani came to power in 2014, a major policy shift was introduced in favour of Pakistan. The new government strategy was to bring Pakistan on board because Ghani was convinced that Pakistan has influence on the Taliban leadership and has an important role in Afghanistan peace process. However, even after one year of negotiations, the new government failed to take Pakistan on board. The situation in the country further deteriorated. After a year, President Ghani visited India

in April 2015. During this visit, India committed to provide three Cheeta helicopters, assistance for the annual maintenance of Habibiya School, Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health; \$5million funds for treatment of Afghan Children with Congenital Heart Disease in India for five years and extended the ICCR scholarships until 2020<sup>93</sup>.

Few months after President Ghani's visit, Indian Prime Minister Modi visited Kabul on 25<sup>th</sup> December 2015 to inaugurate and dedicate the Afghan parliament building to the people of Afghanistan<sup>94</sup>. He also "announced 500 additional scholarships, especially for the children of martyrs of Afghan Security Forces and gifted four Mi-25 helicopters for Afghan Air force"<sup>95</sup>. Similarly, during his next visit to Herat province in western Afghanistan on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2016, Mr. Modi along with President Ghani inaugurated the Afghan-India Friendship Dam<sup>96</sup>. Now, this Dam, also known as Salma Dam, is producing 42 Mega Watt electricity, irrigating 80,000 hectares of agriculture land and also provides jobs to the local people<sup>97</sup>.

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) organized a "conference, exhibition and Business to Business on 'Made in Afghanistan' products in collaboration with the Afghanistan Trade and Revenue Project of USAID on July 19-20, 2016 at New Delhi" and also in other states of India<sup>98</sup>. Today, more than "100 small size Indian businesses have been established in Afghanistan and the Afghan government strongly encourages greater investment in natural resources and infrastructure projects"<sup>99</sup>. On August 22, 2016 Mr Modi and President Ghani jointly tele-inaugurated the renovated Stor Palace located on the Campus of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul. In the same year, President Ghani paid a working visit to India on 14-15 September 2016 and several agreements such as cooperation in civil and commercial matters and also MoU for cooperation on peaceful uses of outer space were signed<sup>100</sup>.

In 2017, Donald Trump announced his South Asia Policy stating that "this move will target safe havens of terrorism in South Asia". India welcomed Trump's determination to overcome the challenges in Afghanistan and confronting the safe havens of terrorism in South Asia<sup>101</sup>. Trump also sought greater role of India in the stabilisation of Afghanistan. India "reaffirmed its commitment to support the government and people of Afghanistan in their efforts to bring peace, security, stability, and prosperity in their country"<sup>102</sup>. Contrary to the previous government, Modi government took a step further and supplied Afghan Air force with eight MI-25 attack helicopters and provided training to the Afghan National Security Forces in India. India also agreed to deepen security cooperation,

strengthening the Afghan security sector and work with the Afghanistan government in dealing with the challenges of cross border terrorism<sup>103</sup>. India wants a peaceful and stable Afghanistan in order to prevent the Taliban rule and the establishment of anti-India camps in Afghanistan. Further, a stable Afghanistan will connect India to CARs. However, Trump's South Asia Policy did not materialize, as the US shifted its focus to dialogue with the Taliban and ignoring the idea of destroying the safe havens of terrorism in Pakistan.

Thus, the Indian development assistance has been different from all other donors to Afghanistan. Though, India is the fifth largest donor to Afghanistan, the aid reached every corner and all provinces in Afghanistan. Even every individual and families directly or indirectly have been the beneficiary of Indian assistance during the past eighteen years.

#### DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FROM IRAN

Afghanistan and Iran have had long historical, cultural and linguistic contacts. Iran has 900 kms border with three provinces, i.e., Herat, Farah, and Nimruz in western Afghanistan. Iran has always been a second home for the Afghan people. During the Soviet occupation (1979-89), the civil war and the Taliban rule, millions of Afghans moved to Iran. Currently, more than two million Afghan refugees are living in Iran. During the Taliban regime, Iran supported Ahmad Shah Masoud and it was one of the earlier supporters of 'war on terror' to topple the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Iran has four main strategic interests: (i) containment of terrorism for maintaining peace within and outside of its territory, (ii) to check narcotics trafficking through Iran. (iii) Repatriation of two and a half million Afghan refugees and, (iv) to have investment and economic influence in Afghanistan<sup>104</sup>. For these reasons, Iran prefers Afghanistan to be less dependent on Pakistan. Iran would like to work with Russia and India to attain its objectives. The Afghan government and its people view Iran as a good neighbour. Many times the Afghan officials, including President Karzai appreciated the participation and support of Iran and its constructive role in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan<sup>105</sup>.

### **Major Projects undertaken by Iran in Afghanistan since 2001**

Iran pledged \$560 million for the reconstruction of Afghanistan at the Tokyo Conference in 2002<sup>106</sup>. It also pledged \$100 million at the London Conference in 2006<sup>107</sup>. Iran promised \$50 million development aid for Afghanistan at the Paris Conference in 2008. Moreover, Iran provided \$300 millions in loans to Afghanistan.

The Iranian government undertook projects in different sectors such as education, agriculture, power generation, reconstruction of roads and bridges and telecommunication. Iran has focused on reconstruction projects in the western and southwestern provinces of Afghanistan. It provided electricity to Nimruz, Farah, and Herat provinces of Afghanistan. Iran is also working on 176 km rail-road to connect Khawf city of Iran with the Herat province of Afghanistan<sup>108</sup>. This project will link Afghanistan with CARs and the European railway networks, which will further strengthen the Afghan-Iran relationship<sup>109</sup>. Iran has also initiated a tax free trade route linking the Iranian port of Chabahar that is located in the Sistan-Balochistan province to Nimruz, Kandahar and then to Kabul<sup>110</sup>.

In 2016, India-Iran-Afghanistan signed an agreement to utilize the Chabahar port as a transit hub; which will connect India to Afghanistan and CARs while Afghanistan will be linked to the Indian Ocean<sup>111</sup>. Pakistan government used to take \$500 million from the Afghan businessmen and government for utilization of Karachi port annually<sup>112</sup>. The Chabahar port will shorten the distance by 700 kilometers from the Persian Gulf to Afghanistan<sup>113</sup>. Today, the Afghan businessmen have an alternative route to international waters<sup>114</sup>. Besides, the Afghan government is no longer dependent on Pakistan for its imports and exports of products. Further, the Iranian government offered many facilities to the Afghan exporters, such as a grant of 90 per cent discount on the port fee, 50 per cent discount on warehouse charges, and full transit rights to the Afghan vehicles on the Iranian road system.

Bilateral trade between Iran and Afghanistan is increasing day by day; the export from Iran to Afghanistan was \$497 million in 2005-6 which reached \$2.87 billion in 2012-13. Further, it reached \$3 billion in 2016-17<sup>115</sup>. On the opposite side, Afghanistan's export to Iran has been few million dollars, though during the peak period 2013-14 it reached \$32 million<sup>116</sup>. Afghanistan is also receiving around \$500 million per year from Iran through remittances<sup>117</sup>. Besides, the Iranian government has provided

credits to the Afghan private sector and helping them in construction of power transmission lines in Nimruz, Farah and Herat provinces of Afghanistan.

### **Iranian Influence and its Challenges for Afghanistan**

Since 2001, Iran has been a stumbling block for the construction of the Kamal Khan Dam in Nimruz province. Iran is concerned that this Dam might limit the flow of fresh water into Iran's province of Sistan-Baluchistan. The Afghan officials claimed that Iran is also trying to prevent the construction of the Bakhsh Abad Dam in Farah province. It is also claimed that Iran attempted to disrupt the construction of Salma Dam when India was working on this project. However, around 3.4 million Iranians are dependent on Harirud water, which flows from Herat province into Khorasan-e-Razavi province of Iran. Due to unresolved water dispute between Afghanistan and Iran, some times there has been tension between the two countries.

Overall, Iran played a positive role in Afghanistan since the Bonn Agreement. However, Iran could not provide substantial assistance to Afghanistan due to the US policy shift against Iran since 2005. Despite that, Iran provided more assistance to Afghanistan than Saudi Arabia and few other countries in the region excepting India. However, the Iranian government has its own interests in Afghanistan. For instance it neither wants the return of the Taliban to power again nor the US permanent presence in Afghanistan.

### **IMPACT OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE IN AFGHANISTAN**

Afghanistan, with the support of the international community, has seen remarkable improvements in various sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, information technology, economic and services. Since 2001, two and a half million Afghan refugees came back and six million internally displaced persons have been settled in the country<sup>118</sup>. During the Taliban regime, less than one million children were enrolled in schools and girls were excluded<sup>119</sup>. Today, more than nine million children go to schools, including 3.5 million girls<sup>120</sup>. The National Solidarity Programme has implemented around 52,000 projects in 27,000 villages, building roads, schools, clinics and water<sup>121</sup>. Post-Taliban, over eight thousand kilometre roads have been constructed and access to electricity and healthcare has been much improved all over the country<sup>122</sup>. Today, Afghanistan has more

than 5,000 trained health workers and infant mortality has significantly reduced in the country. Currently, over 85 per cent of Afghanistan people has access to healthcare services.

Afghan government is concerned with the the rise in narcotics production, the upsurge of the Taliban, the spike in *Daesh* activities, extreme poverty, corruption and deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. One cannot ignore the fact that these problems have emerged due to several factors such as 1) lack of strong Afghan leadership and institutions, 2) reluctance of the UN as aid coordinator resulted in poor planning and management of projects, 3) lack of US and UK interest in fighting the Taliban and narcotics, 4) lack of attention to civilian and development assistance that resulted in extreme poverty and lastly the problem of overlapping of goals and interests of different countries<sup>123</sup>. Today, over 30 international donors are disbursing aid, each with their own agenda and mostly bypassing the government system which led to fragmentation and ineffectiveness of aid in Afghanistan<sup>124</sup>.

Due to the above stated factors, Afghanistan could not stand on its feet even after 18 years despite receiving more assistance than any other country in the world. Because, substantial portion of the aid has been used in the security sector. For instance, the US fund for Afghanistan was \$12.595 billion in 2002, out of which only \$531 million were spent on humanitarian and reconstruction projects<sup>125</sup>. In the last decade, the US spent \$76 billion on arming the Afghan security forces, yet the Afghan security forces are not able to conduct operations against Taliban independently<sup>126</sup>.

Since 2001, billions of dollars have been pumped into Afghanistan. However, the state institutions remain fragile and unable to deliver good governance, basic services or guarantee security to the majority of the population<sup>127</sup>. The US blames Afghan government for its ineffectiveness and corruption. But the US aid agencies and its contractors took the lion's share of the money<sup>128</sup>. The US spent more than \$100 billion in Afghanistan without having an anti-corruption strategy. Half of the aid from USAID was channelled through five big US companies, which cornered 10 to 20 per cent profit by subcontracting the projects to other international and local companies<sup>12930</sup>. For instance, though DynCorp was fined \$7.7 million for unauthorised work in Afghanistan in 2007, it continuously received contracts thereafter<sup>130</sup>. According to studies, over 40 per cent of aid remained in the donor country<sup>131</sup> and more than 50 per cent of aid was tied to purchase goods and services from the donor country which did

not spur the economic growth in Afghanistan<sup>132</sup>.

Similarly, considerable amount of aid went to technical assistance, advisors and consultants to advise the Afghan institutions, which neither Afghanistan needed nor it asked. For instance, each of them had the salary package of \$250,000 to \$500,000 without having knowledge about the Afghan culture, society or languages. Interestingly, an Afghan sitting next to them in the same ministry was receiving a salary of less than \$2,000<sup>133</sup>. Of course, it adversely affected the effectiveness of assistance and also motivated others to have higher income through corrupt means. Further, thousands of projects have remained unfinished or unused due to security reasons in different parts of the country. For instance, a very big hospital (350 beds) built by China in Kabul was completed in 2009 with no ventilation which remains unused until now<sup>134</sup>. Furthermore, the absence of an aid coordinator in Afghanistan from the beginning resulted in unchecked aid flow and overlapping of projects in the country.

### CONCLUSION

The Afghan government and its people are grateful to all those countries that have supported and took part in the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan which resulted in the betterment of different sectors since 2001. However, the way international community particularly the US spend money in the country by bypassing the Afghan institutions encouraged corruption, complicated the coordination process within the country and among the international donors. All donors specially the US procured all its supplies from A to Z from other countries which discouraged the establishment of local companies. Further, whatever was entering Afghanistan was exempted from tax, which was not beneficial for the functioning of the Afghan economy. Furthermore, due to instability and uncertainty, the local and foreign investment did not take place in the country. Today, the opium revenues are ten times more than the Afghan economy and this money is used by the Taliban against the Afghan government and its people.

The Afghan people expected more from the international community than what we see, today, in the country. The expectation from NATO and foreign forces was to bring security in Afghanistan, but later the US came up with the concept of good Taliban and bad Taliban instead of fighting with the Taliban. However, insecurity resulted in the drain of brains and capital, less investment and a hindrance for economic growth.

The second expectation was the eradication of poppy production and poverty reduction. However, drug production increased twenty times since 2001 and the country remains one of the poorest countries in the world with more than 50 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. The exodus of the Afghans moving to other countries since 2015 and also within the country demonstrates their hopelessness of the future of Afghanistan. It only justifies the relevance of international community's assistance to Afghanistan.

9/11 was a perfect excuse for the US to attack Afghanistan, Iraq and change regimes in many countries and also deploying more weapons and troops to its military bases all over the world. It is clear that President Trump has the assignment to attack Iran or change the regime in Iran as soon as possible which will further destabilize the region. The attack on Iran will severely affect Afghanistan. Iran, already, started the deportation of more than two million Afghans.

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### Acronyms

US	United States
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Organisation
UNSC	United Nation Security Council
UN	United Nations
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
UK	United Kingdom
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
LOTFA	Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan
EU	European Union
ODA	Official Development Assistance
EUPOL	European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan
GSP	Generalized Scheme of Preferences
PRTs	Provincial Reconstruction Teams
MIP	Multilateral Indicative Programme
CAPD	Cooperation Agreement on Partnership Development
UNDP	United Nation Development Program

DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DIAG	Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups
APRP	Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme
JFPR	Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction
ADB	Asian Development Bank
TMAF	Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Policy
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDPS	Small Development Projects Scheme
ICCR	Indian Council for Cultural Relations
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
MS	Member States

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# THE DRUG SITUATION AND THE PRACTICE OF DRUG CONTROL IN AFGHANISTAN

LI XINWEI

## ABSTRACT

*Afghanistan is the most important drug-producing country in the world, and drug manufacture and trafficking pose a serious threat to the situation both in Afghanistan and the region. Although the international community and the Afghan government have taken measures to combat drug production and trafficking, the drug situation in Afghanistan has not improved in recent years. With changing domestic and regional situation in Afghanistan, the drug situation in Afghanistan is further complicated. Overall, drug trafficking seriously endangers Afghanistan's national governance and public security system, while armed groups profit from drug manufacture and trafficking, worsening the situation in Afghanistan and safe environment. In order to solve the drug problem in Afghanistan, it is necessary for the Afghan government to pay more attention to this problem, fundamentally improve the security environment, cut off the chain of links between drug funds and illegal armed and corrupt officials, and establish a normal economic system. The international community needs to make continuous efforts to improve and build a peaceful and stable situation in Afghanistan, which is the prerequisite for solving the drug problem.*

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, Drug Security

## DRUG SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

### Drug production in Afghanistan

To date, Afghanistan remains the world's leading source of drugs, and the biggest obstacle to the government's fight against drug trafficking are illegal armed groups and corruption. Although the policy orientation of the Afghan government is to resolutely combat drug trafficking,

corruption is still widespread, and even some government officials are directly involved in it profiting from drug trafficking. Corruption occurs in everything from drug manufacturing to sales, which hinders the arrest and prosecution of drug criminals. At the same time, Afghanistan also lacks the material and security environmental security needed for counter-drug trafficking. According to 2017 report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and counter-narcotics department in Afghanistan (MCN) opium poppy cultivation in the country in 2017 was 328,304 hectares. This means that opium cultivation has increased by 63 per cent and production by 88 per cent as compared with 2016. The U. S. government figures show the same trend. Opium in Afghanistan is usually refined into heroin or morphine which are sent to neighboring countries. The cultivation and processing of opium is an important link in drug production. Nowadays, Afghanistan has formed a complete chain from production to consumption, and in drug production. Afghanistan has become an important drug in the world. The source, opium and marijuana production are among the highest in the world.

There has been no fundamental change in opium cultivation and production from 2017 to 2018. Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan increased significantly in 2017 to a record 32,8000 hectares, an increase of 127,000 hectares as compared with 2016. The increased in opium cultivation led to the increase in production. In 2017, opium production in Afghanistan increased by about 87 percent compared with 2016, and the output value increased by about 40 to 120 percent. However, opium poppy cultivation declined in Afghanistan in 2018, according to the statistics of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to 263,000 hectares, down nearly 20 per cent from 2017. Alongwith the decline in acreage cultivation, opium production also decreased in 2018, with an estimated opium production of 6,400 tons, down 29 per cent from 9,000 tons in 2017. The United Nations believes the decline in opium cultivation and production is mainly due to drought in many parts of Afghanistan in 2018.

According to the data from the Afghan counter-drug sector, the proportion of the population under opium poppy cultivation and opium production in rural areas in 2017 is as follows: opium poppy cultivation and opium production in only 2 per cent of villages in the central region, is more than 50 per cent in the eastern region and about 85 per cent in the southern region. In 2017, the area under opium poppy cultivation in Helmand province reached 144,000 hectares, the highest in the country.

It accounted for 44% of the opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan that year. There was no significant increase in marijuana cultivation in Afghanistan in 2017 as compared with the 2012 survey, which is enough to produce 1,400 tons of marijuana a year.

### **Opium production has become an important source of income for Afghan farmers**

As an important measure of opium production, the “farm price” of opium fully illustrates the Afghan opium market. The total “farm price” of opium grown by Afghan farmers in 2017 was about US \$1.4 billion, an increase of 55 percent compared with 2016. But in 2018, the total value of “farm price” fell 56 percent as compared with the same period last year, due to the decline in opium cultivation and production. Opium cultivation earns a lot of income, which is one of the main reasons why it is difficult for Afghan farmers to switch to legitimate crops. Moreover, the rural labor force is absorbed by opium cultivation and production and the income generated is the main source of income for some rural families in Afghanistan, which meets the expenses of farmers in purchasing necessities such as food and medicine. Local economies in some rural areas, such as small-scale enterprises, also rely on opium income from farmers to maintain their operations. But it is difficult for farmers to use the income from opium cultivation and production for developmental investments such as education. It can be said that opium trafficking has become an important part of the Afghan economy, has formed a mature market and trade network, and a large number of Afghans have access to the economy through revenue generated by opium trafficking.

### **Heroin is the main opium drug in Afghanistan**

In 2017, heroin production in Afghanistan reached an all-time high. In that year, only about 1,100 tons of opium produced by Afghanistan was consumed, while the remaining 7,600 tons were used to make heroin. However, due to the risk of seizure etc. in the production and trafficking process, the amount of heroin that eventually arrives in the consumer market is lower than that.

## **DRUG TRAFFICKING IN AFGHANISTAN**

### **The drug trafficking group is the main profit maker of drugs**

Among the chain of opium vendors in Afghanistan, international drug-crime organizations were the most profitable, and they traffick opium and heroin into consumer markets such as Europe. Today, the drug dealer industry in Afghanistan is mainly the processing of opium and trafficking to neighbouring countries. According to the toxic volume of the surrounding countries, about 48 to 56 per cent of the opium was processed as heroin in Afghanistan in 2017, while the rest was exported as opium. The income of the drug production and trafficking groups from opium production and trafficking to the Afghan border is approximately \$ 264.8 billion. In 2000, a large number of perishable chemicals and their drug precursors also flowed into Afghanistan.

**The Drug trafficking route has covered the northern, southern and western parts of Afghanistan**

The current flow of drug trafficking in Afghanistan is the Balkan route (via Iran-Turkey-Eastern Europe-Western Europe), the southern route (Pakistan/ Iran-Africa, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Canada), and the North (Central Asia-Russia). The size of the drug manufacturing plants in Afghanistan and the neighbouring countries is large, with large quantities of illegal import of toxic chemicals and the production of large quantities of opium into heroin and morphine for export. In the first nine months of 2017, the report of the Afghan anti-drug police force, states that 105 units were destroyed, and seized nearly 28,000 liters of acetic anhydride. In addition, U.S. and NATO forces destroyed some drug processing plants linked to the Taliban, during air strikes.

**DRUG CONSUMPTION IN AFGHANISTAN**

**Afghan drug users show a trend of more drug users in rural areas than in cities, and the number of drug users among women and children is high**

The problem of drug abuse is widespread in Afghanistan. Data from a 2015 U.S.-supported survey of drug use in Afghan cities and rural areas shows that about 11 percent of Afghanistan's population is using drugs, including 5.3 percent of the urban population and 13 percent of the rural population. Afghanistan has the highest drug use rate among women and children in the world, with 30.6 per cent of rural households using drugs. The Government of Afghanistan recognizes that the country has

the highest drug abuse in the world. The drug use rate in rural areas is much higher than in urban areas, with at least one drug addict in more than 30 percent of rural Afghan households, according to the survey. To curb this, the United States funded a new pilot project by the Afghan government in 2017 in rural areas to stop the spread of drug abuse trends. In addition, the Afghan Ministry of Public Health supports 88 drug treatment centers across the country, but the number and capacity of these institutions are far from keeping pace with demand. The United Nations Office on drugs and Crime has provided Afghanistan with specialized drug addiction treatment programmes for children and trained staff to assist in drug abuse in the addicted children. It shows that Afghanistan is facing a health crisis caused by drug abuse. Afghan government officials say the government has recognized the great harm caused by drugs and pays more attention to anti-drug work, as illustrated by the Afghanistan National Drug Action Plan, adopted at the end of 2015. But the Afghan government has made slow progress in implementing the plan and will still need strong assistance from the international community to promote counter-narcotics efforts in the future.

## DRUG CONTROL SYSTEM IN AFGHANISTAN

### **Afghan anti-drug laws and regulations**

The main law in force in Afghanistan in the field of counter-drug control is the Anti-Drug Law of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which was promulgated in 2005 and amended in 2010. The main purpose of the enactment of the counter-narcotics law is to curb the proliferation of opium poppy, marijuana and other drug plants in Afghanistan and to impose penalties on those engaged in cultivation and trafficking; control and management of the production, sale and application of essential hemp drugs, precursor chemicals and drug precursors to ensure their legitimate use and avoid being used in illegal industries; punishment of illicit trafficking in essential drugs, precursor chemicals and precursors; management and assessment of government related drug-related work. The implementation of the strategy and action plan includes the implementation of alternative planting projects, construction of drug treatment centers, return of drug addicts after drug treatment to society, and promotion of international cooperation in drug control, etc. It is worth noting that Afghanistan promulgated a newly revised criminal law in

2018, which empowers law enforcement agencies to confiscate assets, including land, vehicles, used for or acquired through illicit drug production and trafficking, in order to prevent landowners from growing original drug plants such as opium poppy.

In addition to establishing the legal basis for counter-drug work, including the counter-narcotics law, the Government of Afghanistan has also formulated a number of national counter-drug strategies and action plans, with a separate Ministry of Counter-Narcotics. The current strategies and plans are mainly the National Drug Control Strategy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the National Anti-Narcotics Action Plan of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for 2015-2019, National Policy on alternative cultivation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, National Policy against Drug trafficking in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and National Policy on Regional and International Drug Cooperation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

#### **Afghan counter-Narcotics Agency**

The Afghan government is committed to fighting drug trafficking in the hope of solving the drug problem in the country, and has paid attention to some of the fundamental causes of the drug economy, including instability, poverty, organized crime and lagging economic development. The Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of Afghanistan is the main agency for formulating counter-drug policies and coordinating the work of the relevant governments. The anti-drug work in Afghanistan is mainly the responsibility of Ministry of Counter Narcotics, responsible for other departments involved in anti-drug work. The main legal basis on which anti-drug work in Afghanistan is based are the Afghan Constitution, the Afghan Anti-Narcotics Law and Afghanistan. Narcotics Control Act.

Since taking office, Ghani has made control of drug production and sales an important part of his reforms, and has worked to mainstream drug control on the government's agenda, winning support from government departments that have traditionally been weak. The Afghan government attaches great importance to drug control as an important part of Afghanistan's national development. The Afghan government considers that drug control works in multi-sectoral integration, and the ministry of drug control is responsible for overall coordination. The main tasks of drug control in Afghanistan include: formulating national progress plans and related policies; with the ministry of finance coordinating drug funds, coordination of various departments of anti-drug work, supervision

of the national anti-drug strategy implementation. Therefore, the ministry of drug control is responsible for the implementation of alternative cultivation projects in Afghanistan, coordination of anti-drug law enforcement operations, anti-drug publicity, preparation of progress reports, and international anti-drug cooperation. The main cooperation agency of UNODC in Afghanistan is also the ministry of drug control of Afghanistan.

In addition to the ministry of narcotics, the counter-narcotics force is the main executive branch of anti-narcotics operations in Afghanistan. The Afghan anti-drug police force was set up in 2003 under the Afghan interior ministry, which is led by the deputy minister of anti-narcotics. In early days, the anti-drug police force had weak detection and operational experience, and the drug trafficking groups were not effectively attacked. The United States, Britain, the European Union and the United Nations have all sent experts to Afghanistan's counter-narcotics police to train them and improve their capacity building as international support for the fight against drugs grows. For example, the Afghan counter-narcotics police, with the help of British police, has played an important role in the anti-narcotics operation in Helmand province by setting up a branch in Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital. The Afghan narcotics police are now divided into teams based on their detection and operational scope. They operate in all 34 Afghan provinces and are trained by agencies such as the drug enforcement administration, the British police and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Since its development, Afghanistan's anti-drug police has made certain achievements in organization and capacity building, and its operational capacity has been greatly improved. Both U.S. special forces and the drug enforcement administration provide operational guidance to Afghan counter-narcotics police. In the first nine months of 2017, the anti-drug police force conducted 84 operations, seized more than \$300 million worth of drugs and chemicals, including 16.8 tons of opium, 5.4 tons of heroin, 132 tons of marijuana and 37.5 tons of morphine, and arrested 118 people. Anti-drug police forces also face a bigger risk, particularly the safety of anti-drug police and their families. Due to the penetration of drug economy into the country at all levels of society, it is difficult to achieve isolation between drug workers with drug traffickers. Domestic security environment deterioration, in Afghanistan greatly increases the drug safety risks to the police and their families. Secondly, there is serious corruption within the Afghan government, including

within the anti-drug police force. The US State Department says that some Afghan government officials directly benefit from drug trafficking, which significantly impacts on drug enforcement.

At present, Afghanistan has formed a drug control institution system with the ministry of drug control and anti-drug police force as the core and multiple departments participating together. Meanwhile, specialized departments dealing with drug cases have been set up in customs and other institutions. It is important to note that in order to improve the Afghan judiciary processing professional drug-related cases, the government according to the new revision of the “anti-drug law” regulation, appointed the prosecutor and investigators. Since its establishment, the criminal justice panel has made some achievements in drug trials. Criminal justice criminal group was established with the assistance of the United States and other countries. The anti-drug justice center is responsible for the specific operation, being the main trial of drugs and drug-related cases, including corruption. From December 22, 2016 to September 22, 2017, it dealt with 267 cases of criminal justice, cases involving 351 of the criminal suspects. The drug-related cases related to 1.6 tons of heroin, 28.5 tons of raw opium, 18.4 tons of morphine and 213.6 tons of marijuana.

In 2017, the eradication increased, with 750 hectares being destroyed, as compared with 355 hectares destroyed in 2016. Most of the eradicated poppy fields are in Badakhshan and Nangarhar provinces. Fourteen provinces carried out eradication operations in 2017. The main reasons for the inability to eradicate poppy cultivation are the deteriorating security situation, the inability of the government to act on policy and the inefficiency of the ministry of drug control. The United States supports poppy eradication through the governors’ leadership program, paying provincial governors \$250 per hectare based on the UNODC’s verified acreage.

In addition, with international assistance, Afghanistan has established anti-drug public awareness programs to try to reduce demand and harm. These include programs to stop poppy cultivation and prevent drug abuse. The United States supports anti-drug programs in Afghan schools, training more than 1,900 teachers and offering anti-drug programs in more than 900 schools in 2017. Surveys show that Afghanistan’s anti-drug public propaganda is intensifying.

### **Existing Anti-Drug Program**

In 2015, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani approved the implementation of

the national anti-drug action plan, covering four years and aimed to reduce poppy cultivation, reduce the production and trafficking of opiates; and reduce demand. The national drug control plan of action develops precise plans for each environment in which drugs are produced and trafficked, and provides incentives for alternative cultivation and eradication. Its actions focus on combating drug trafficking, developing alternative crops, strengthening law enforcement, reducing demand, and enhancing the Afghan government's capacity to combat drug abuse.

In order to reduce the acreage of Afghanistan's indigenous drug plants the international community and Afghan government are engaged in reducing poppy cultivation mainly through alternative cultivation projects based on local resources in Afghanistan. Development of science and technology actively helps the use of agricultural crops in Afghanistan or replace poppy cultivation and the drug production and other industries, to gradually weaken Afghanistan's economic dependence on drugs, to use normal economic system instead of the drug economy. In the past, the ban in Afghanistan mainly relied on the policy of forced eradication, which damaged the interests of farmers, damaged the relationship between the government and farmers, and left room for the Taliban and other armed groups to grow in rural areas. So the Afghan government helps by providing loans to farmers, improving the security environment, construction of infrastructure and encourage the farmers to grow legitimate economic crops.

International narcotics control board, believe that only in the atmosphere of stability in areas that can provide full security environment for farmers, alternative planting project implementation is feasible. Federation of international drug policy for the concrete implementation of alternative planting has the following views: project running party should help farmers by formulating reasonable, clear steps to help their families with a stable income and make sure not to use force to remove poppy crops. In addition, alternative crop farmers can form an autonomous organization within the scope of the project area, get the project-host country and international organizations to participate in the decision-making process. Alternative planting project should be consistent with poverty alleviation, poverty reduction, human rights and other development goals, respect traditional culture values, where the project is located, and obtain the support of government agencies including health, education and other social sectors. Actually, procedure and time needed for replacing planting project requirements is very complex and to achieve

the above conditions is still too early to Afghanistan. So while alternative crop is of great significance for reducing drug supply, the difficulty of the comprehensive implementation is still very high in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's alternative cultivation policy has been developed with the help of the international community. Even under the Taliban, the U.S. drug enforcement administration provided Afghanistan with 1.5 million dollars to develop alternative crops. After the outbreak of the war on terror, UK with the help of Afghanistan implemented a large-scale eradication programme, but the measure failed completely. So USA and Britain work together and choose saffron and wheat. In the implementation of alternative planting, effect is different in different areas. For instance planting wheat in Nangarhar province failed, as it did not really benefit the farmers. In Helmand there was a Governor who ran a wheat substitution programme, which had some success, but it has not been sustained due to the situation in Helmand. The experience of Helmand province during the Karzai administration has been tried elsewhere in Afghanistan, but it has not achieved the expected results. The main reason is that there are no conditions for the development of alternative planting projects in Afghanistan, and the deteriorating security environment and economic situation make it extremely difficult to implement alternative planting projects.

Despite this, the international community has not abandoned its assistance to Afghanistan for alternative cultivation. In close cooperation with the Afghan government, the following three projects are being implemented in the country:

**CARD - F** project: the project by Afghanistan's drug control department, the ministry of agriculture, ministry of finance and other related departments and ministries have the major tasks of establishing complete agricultural industry chain, improve the added value of agricultural products and infrastructure construction in rural areas to provide sustainable and efficient investment, besides expanding the sales market of agricultural products. The CARD-F project aims to increase the legitimate income of rural households and expand legitimate employment channels, with the hope of reducing the acreage and yield of raw drug plants by raising the income level of rural residents and creating more jobs. CARD-F regards alternative planting as an important way to increase the legitimate income of rural residents and improve the administrative capacity of the government to remove obstacles in the implementation of alternative planting projects. In 2013, the project for the rural residents

provided 4,500 jobs, and income of the rural residents increased by more than \$100. Since 2014, the CARD-F project has entered a new development stage, mainly developing the dairy products, cotton products, grain and grape industries in Balkh and Parwan provinces.

**Food zone project:** this project is led by the Afghan government, mainly to develop integrated farming in rural areas, mainly in Kandahar, Farah, Uruzgan and Badakhshan provinces. The project was first implemented as an alternative wheat planting in Helmand province as mentioned above. The current alternative crops have been expanded to include wheat, saffron, cumin, licorice, grape, etc., as well as livestock products and dairy products. The project funding is mainly provided by the Afghan ministry of finance, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Canada is responsible for providing seeds and fertilizers, etc., the US and the UK provide promotional funds, law enforcement capital comes from the Afghan government budget and direct technical assistance plan. Afghanistan's drug control department special census shows that the project area farmers income accounted for 36% of its revenues from poppy in areas which did not carry out the project. In project implementation area, income of poppy farmers accounted for 30%; wheat accounted for 27% of the total income of farmers in the unimplemented project area, compared with 32% in the project area. Overall, the Food zone program has been a positive contributor to the decline in poppy cultivation, but the overall increase in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has largely offset the results as security has deteriorated.

**GPI project:** The project is implemented by the Ministry of Drug Control of Afghanistan and funded by the International Narcotics Bureau. The aim of this project is to provide a series of sustainable development projects, including the construction of school buildings, irrigation facilities, roads and other infrastructure, and the establishment of vocational training centres, for reducing or achieving opium-free provinces to encourage Provincial Governors to adopt anti-drug policies by means of assistance.

## INTERNATIONAL BILATERAL ANTI-DRUG COOPERATION

### **Drug control cooperation between the United States and Afghanistan**

In the field of international cooperation, the United States and Afghanistan have not signed bilateral extradition treaties and other mutual legal assistance treaties so far, but there is indeed close cooperation between

the two sides in drug control work. Afghanistan is a party or participant in a series of multilateral treaties on mutual legal assistance and extradition. The main policy of the United States on drug control in Afghanistan is to restore Afghanistan's agricultural economic system, strengthen the capacity of Afghan drug control institutions, and destroy the links between drugs, armed elements and corruption. Afghanistan is an agricultural country, with agriculture accounting for more than 40% of its GDP. The key to reducing opium poppy cultivation and opium production is to develop alternative cultivation and create sustainable jobs for the labour force. The United States has worked with Afghanistan and other countries to develop a range of alternative farming projects, including high-value-added crops, wheat, livestock products and horticultural products. At present, the United States is implementing the Alternative Development Initiative (ADI) under the Afghan National Development Strategic Framework to promote agricultural development to promote alternative cultivation and reduce drug cultivation and production. Through the BADIL project implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the diversified production structure of farmers and the development of small farmers in 13 provinces of Afghanistan has been strengthened. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme is implementing a community development project in rural areas of Farah province in Afghanistan to reduce farmers' dependence on opium poppy cultivation, which focuses on the development of rural infrastructure, including irrigation, transportation and storage facilities.

### **Anti-drug cooperation between Russia and Afghanistan**

Russia provides anti-drug assistance, including training, to Afghanistan in a number of international cooperation frameworks. Russia, Japan and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime jointly launched a training project for anti-drug officials from Afghanistan and Central Asian countries at the Russian "Domodedovo" training centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The latest group of Afghan trainees graduated from the project on 3 October 2018. This training project has helped a group of Afghan anti-drug officials improve their professional and law enforcement capabilities. In addition, Russia is an active participant in the Paris Pact, a cooperative mechanism involving more than 50 countries and international organizations, which is committed to combating drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan. Russia plays its role mainly through the Paris-Moscow Process mechanism under the framework of the Paris Convention.

Within this mechanism, Russia carries out joint action by law enforcement agencies of all countries in the region to combat drug trafficking and its precursors. At the same time, it takes the Central Asian Regional Intelligence Coordination Centre and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as the core to comprehensively combat drug crime, reduce demand and reduce danger. It also coordinates the assistance provided by relevant countries to Afghanistan. In addition, Russia carries out multilateral anti-drug cooperation with Afghanistan through leading international and regional organizations such as CIS and Ji'an Organization.

### **Anti-drug cooperation between China and Afghanistan**

In 2006, the Chinese Government and the Afghan Government signed an inter-governmental agreement on anti-drug cooperation. Since then, the two countries have launched practical cooperation in various forms, including information exchange, personnel training and other forms, and cooperated to crack a number of drug-related cases. Relying on a number of police academies, China has provided training to Afghan anti-drug police officers. So far, 10 training courses have been held and more than 200 law enforcement officers have been trained for the Afghan side.

## **MULTILATERAL DRUG CONTROL COOPERATION**

### **Cooperation between the United Nations and Afghanistan in drug control**

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is the lead agency in international cooperation on drug issues in Afghanistan. Under its leadership, a series of specific cooperative mechanisms for Afghanistan have been established, and a special office has been set up in Afghanistan, which covers part of the anti-drug cooperation projects of major countries in Afghanistan, such as the United States and Russia. It plays an important role in solving the drug problem in Afghanistan by the international community. The main current projects of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Afghanistan are the Afghanistan National Project 2016-2019, which aims to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan Government, assist it in building a policy framework and provide accurate data and information to counter the drug threat. The objective of the project is to improve the security and stability situation in Afghanistan, promote the improvement of governance, rule of law and protect human rights,

especially the rights and interests of women and children. The project mainly consists of four parts: law enforcement; criminal justice; health and alternative cultivation; publicity, policy and research. The United Nations office on Drugs and Crime, is based on “the Afghan national project”, coordination office in Afghanistan and Central Asia office, such as common regional and international cooperation projects, the current main Paris Convention, Afghanistan and neighboring areas, Afghanistan’s opium trade plan, Afghanistan - Kyrgyzstan - Tajikistan initiative, etc.

The Paris Convention Initiative was established in 2003, and now more than 50 countries and international organizations have participated. In the Vienna Declaration of 2012, partners will strengthen cooperation in four areas: regional initiatives, combating financial flows related to drug trafficking, preventing trafficking in precursors, reducing the abuse and dependence of sesame drugs. Today, the Paris Pact initiative has progressed to the fourth stage.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime coordinates the Afghanistan office, office of Central Asia, Iran office and other departments. Set up as regional coordination mechanism, its main goal is to strengthen cooperation with Afghanistan’s neighbours, jointly cope with drug threat, the current cooperation plan for 2016-2019, by the regional law enforcement cooperation, international law, prevention and impact on vulnerable groups of drug addiction treatment and trending of four points project.

### **Drug control cooperation between the SCO and Afghanistan**

The issue of drugs is a major concern of the SCO. All SCO member states are faced with the real threat of drug trafficking in Afghanistan. The SCO signed in 2004 the agreement with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on cooperation to crack down on illegal trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic drugs and precursors. In 2009, SCO signed an agreement with Afghanistan fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. It laid the framework to carry out cooperation in drug control. Afghanistan will conduct practical cooperation in the following aspects: comparing and analyzing drug control laws of member states and improving the legal basis; Inter-departmental exchange of information; Implementing joint anti-drug operations; To supervise fine hemp drugs and precursor chemicals; Cracking down on money laundering activities involving proceeds from fine hemp drugs and precursor chemicals; Training drug control personnel; Reducing demand through preventive education and

treatment of drug users; To conduct communication and exchanges with Afghan drug control agencies by convening a meeting of drug control leaders of member states; Establishment of regional drug control centres; Using the role of the Central Asian regional information coordination centre to involve Afghanistan and Turkmenistan in drug control cooperation; Strengthen cooperation between SCO and Afghanistan in combating drug crimes. SCO members in its 2015 summit held in Ufa, signed an agreement, by which all parties undertook to work together under bilateral and multilateral frameworks to deal with the drug threat and solve the problem. Under the framework of the agreement, the SCO member states formed an effective cooperation mechanism with Afghanistan and to conduct practical cooperation with Afghanistan, including training, intelligence exchange and cooperative actions.

### THE IMPACT OF DRUGS ON AFGHAN SECURITY

#### **Armed groups profit from drug production and trafficking through taxes and other forms**

The US State Department believes that there is a symbiotic relationship between illicit armed groups and illicit drug trafficking, with drug traffickers providing arms, money and materials in exchange for protection, and some illicit armed groups using drug trafficking to fund their activities. However, drug trafficking is not limited to areas controlled by illegal armed forces alone. Corruption is the main driving force, undermining the overall governance system and development of Afghanistan. Afghanistan's security situation continued to deteriorate in 2017-2018, the frequency of violent attacks did not reduce. As compared with 2016 attacks such as suicide bombings led to rise in civilian casualties as NATO forces withdrew. Drug trafficking drives the illegal economic chain, infiltrating every level in urban and rural areas, especially in rural areas. Poppy cultivation and opium have become the main source of income for farmers. Opium has become an important part of the Afghan economy. It is estimated that in 2017 Afghan opium (including heroin) output between valued \$4.1 - \$6.6 billion, i.e., equivalent to about 20% to 32% of GDP in Afghanistan.

#### **The Scope of drug cultivation is positively correlated with the scope of control of armed groups**

According to a domestic survey conducted by the Afghan ministry of narcotics control, 54 percent of poppy-growing villages surveyed in 2017 were under the control of armed groups, as compared with 23 percent of poppy-free villages. In particular, Helmand province, where poppy cultivation increased 79 percent in 2017, has seen the government lose almost total control of the countryside. Poppy-growing areas in Helmand, Uruzgan and northern Kandahar provinces are largely under the control of armed groups. Another province that has seen a significant increase in poppy cultivation is Badakhshan province, which has filled the gap left by declining poppy cultivation in central Afghanistan. The above situation shows that there is a correlation between opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and the government's control ability. In areas with high government control, the opium poppy cultivation area is likely to decline, while in areas with low government control, the opium poppy cultivation area is likely to rise significantly.

The Taliban have begun to profit directly from the drug industry. Poppy cultivation and opium production are an important source of income for all types of armed groups including the Taliban, and their profit mode is mainly achieved by collecting tithes tax on the cultivation of all kinds of crops including poppy and opium production. About 66 percent of village leaders surveyed by Afghanistan's narcotics ministry said that various militant groups, including the Taliban tax opium production: (32 percent by Taliban, 22 percent by other insurgent groups, 12 percent by rebels, 18 percent of respondents said that "powerful people" also tax opium production. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime believes that the Taliban earned at least \$26 million from poppy cultivation and opium production in 2017. In addition to tax, there are signs that the Taliban benefit directly from drugs production. Afghanistan's drug control department spokesman said in an interview in September 2017, that drug processing factory is controlled by the Taliban to buy weapons.

### CONCLUSION

The cultivation, manufacture and trafficking of drugs in Afghanistan have taken a serious toll on Afghan governance, public security and health, while fostering corruption, funding militants and worsening the country's security environment. Poppy cultivation is difficult to be eradicated because of the country's severely underdeveloped infrastructure and weak

economic system, as well as Afghan government's lack of control over the drug problem. Afghans don't even think that the government will crack down on illegal drug producers. However, Afghan government's commitment to the drug problem is slowly increasing, and the intensity of the fight against the drug problem is slowly increasing. Therefore, the Afghan government needs to pay more attention to the drug problem, fundamentally improve the security environment, cut the links between drug money and illegal armed forces and corrupt officials, and establish a normal economic system. It's going to be extremely difficult for the Afghan government to achieve that goal, and it's going to require constant assistance from the international community.



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**Human Rights Council**

Forty-second session

9–27 September 2019

Agenda item 4

**Human rights situations that require the Council's attention**

**Written statement\* submitted by Himalayan Research and  
Cultural Foundation, a non-governmental organization in  
special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is  
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 August 2019]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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## Towards sustainable peace and security in Afghanistan

Even though war against terror in Afghanistan was launched over eighteen years ago, many basic freedoms – from insecurity, fear and poverty are yet to be achieved. The battle between the forces of democratisation and those of destabilisation in post-Taliban Afghanistan is at its peak. Reports of ambushes, killings and bomb explosions across Afghanistan have been coming almost daily. The threat to security in Afghanistan is from the attacks by the resurgent Taliban and of late by IS extremists. The 24<sup>th</sup> Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted recently to the UN Security Council (S/2019/570 dated 15 July 2019) stated that “Al-Qaida considers Afghanistan a continuing safe haven for its leadership relying on its long-standing and strong relationship with the Taliban leadership. Al-Qaida continues to cooperate with Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and the Haqqani network. Al-Qaida members continue to function routinely as military and religious instructors for the Taliban”. While both the US and Taliban claim to be making progress in the peace deal, there has been steep rise in attacks across Afghanistan, with over 1,500 people killed or injured in July 2019 alone.

The year 2018 witnessed an 11 per cent increase in civilian deaths as compared to that in 2017. As the UN report on human rights situation in Afghanistan (A/HRC/40/45 dated 28 January 2019) pointed out that “The year 2018 began with two major attacks in Kabul aone in Jalalabad resulting in 143 civilian deaths and 265 injured between 20 and 27 January 2018.” On 20 January 2018 Taliban attacked Kabul’s Intercontinental Hotel killing more than 20 persons including 14 foreigners. On 27 January 2018 Taliban struck again blowing up an explosive laden ambulance in a busy Kabul street killing over 100 people. On 28 January 2018, 11 Afghan soldiers were killed and 16 others wounded by the IS attack near a military academy in Kabul. On 12 February 2018, 16 Afghan forces were killed by the Taliban in Helmand. On 19 February 2018, bodies of 9 civilians abducted by militants in early 2017 were found in the eastern province of Nangarhar. In April 2018 the Taliban launched what it calls *Al Khandaq* jihadi offensive targeting Afghan national forces in Afghanistan. Burqa clad suicide bombers struck a Shia mosque in eastern Afghanistan on Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2018, as it was crowded with worshippers for their weekly prayers, killing 29 people and injuring over 80 persons. On 21 January 2019 the Taliban killed over 100 Afghan security forces inside the training centre in Maidan Shahr, 30 kms south-west of Kabul. On 5 February 2019 the Taliban attacked an army base in Kunduz, northerem Afghanistan killing 26 Afghan security forces.

The Taliban are desperately working to undermine the state and create chaos and instability in Afghanistan. While the negotiations between the US and Taliban are continuing, the Taliban have actually escalated the conflict by carrying out several deadly attacks killing hundreds of civilians and security personnel. The Taliban targeted schools and mosques during the election period to disrupt and undermine the electoral process. ISIL-Khorasan targeted the Shia Hazara Muslim minority, causing over 1,800 civilian casualties (including over 500 deaths), nearly double the number of casualties claimed by ISIL in 2017. According to February 2019 report of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 10,993 civilian casualties (3,804 people including 927 children killed and 7,189 injured) were documented in the year 2018, caused by suicide attacks, IED blasts etc. Another report of UNAMA titled Increasing Harm to Afghan civilians from the Deliberate and Indiscriminate use of Improved Explosive Devices documents a sharp increase in 2018 in the killings and maiming of Afghan civilians by suicide bombers and IEDs. It reports that “bombs were designed and placed to detonate among crowds of civilians to kill and maim Afghan men, women and children, destroy livelihoods, disrupt lives and cerate terror among the survivors”. The report identifies the victims as students, players and spectators at cricket and wrestling matches, worshippers at mosques, humanitarian aid workers, journalists, medical personnel, education and civil government staff, civilians, election workers, men and women. Over 400 schools for both boys and girls have closed in the Taliban dominated areas of Afghanistan, due to attacks by the Taliban and threats to teachers, students and their families jeopardising the fate of over 4 million girls enrolled in schools and universities. While the US and Taliban negotiators were meeting in Qatar, the Taliban assault and car bombing killed at least 40 people in Kabul on 1 July 2019,

damaging a school and injuring over 105 persons including 51 students. In yet another attack on 27 July 2019 a powerful explosion hit central Kabul wounding Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's running mate Amrullah Saleh on the very first day of campaigning for the presidential elections. This attack demonstrated Taliban's desperation to thwart the forthcoming presidential election. Again on 7 August 2019 the Taliban suicide car bomb attack in Kabul killed 14 people and wounded 145 others. The Taliban and ISIS have increased their attacks, the former pushing for the withdrawal of US forces and the latter exterminating the ethnic-religious minorities. The IS claimed responsibility for a suicide blast at a wedding reception in a minority Shia neighbourhood on 18 August 2019, which killed 63 people and injured over 180 persons. The IS brazenly stated that "its bomber had been able to infiltrate the reception and detonate his explosives in the crowd of infidels".

While the negotiations between the US and Taliban are continuing, the conflict has actually escalated with recurrent deadly attacks killing hundreds of civilians and security personnel. International community needs to shed its ambivalence and evolve a concerted strategy to curb terrorism and extremism in and around Afghanistan by stopping their sources of funds, arms, logistics and training and ideological motivation. Indian policy has been to help in rebuilding the physical infrastructure in Afghanistan, training and scholarships for human resource and skill development and capacity building, building better connectivity for Afghanistan and enhancing trade and investment linkages with Afghanistan. The reconstruction of collapsed social and economic infrastructure and development of Afghanistan as the transit hub of regional trade and traffic, will help in putting the social and economic situation in Afghanistan back on tracks, though the process is cumbersome and long drawn. Intra-Afghan peace and consensus among various Afghan groups/stake holders is the sine qua non for lasting peace and stability.

Any attempts at peace and reconciliation should not be rushed and should preserve the constitutional process and other gains of the last 18 years. It should also ensure independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. Such process should be based on principles of shunning violence and severing ties with international terror networks; accepting the Afghan Constitution; and honoring the rights of weaker sections of Afghan society, ethnic-religious minorities, women and children. In the current environment we have a situation where while a dialogue process between the US and the Taliban is underway, the latter has launched fresh offensives. While the peace process should be aimed at engaging and bringing together all the Afghan groups, it should isolate the extremist and terrorist networks which are bent upon recreating the Caliphate/Emirate in Afghanistan. During their talks with the Afghan politicians including former president Hamid Karzai at Moscow in February 2019, the head of the Taliban delegation Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai emphatically rejected the Kabul government constitution as invalid and demanded an Islamic constitution to be drafted by Islamic scholars.

So ensuring sustainable security and peace in Afghanistan is a great challenge facing the international community. International community needs to shed its ambivalence and evolve a concerted strategy to curb terrorism and extremism in and around Afghanistan by stopping their sources of funds, arms, logistics and training and ideological motivation. The reconstruction of collapsed social and economic infrastructure and development of Afghanistan as the transit hub of regional trade and traffic, will help in putting the social and economic situation in Afghanistan back on tracks, though the process is cumbersome and long drawn. International agencies like United Nations, World Bank, European Union etc. need to implement the reconstruction programmes employing professional and committed cadres in coordination with the local agencies/personnel. The future of Afghanistan with guarantees of peace, security and well being of its people hinges upon the success of reconciliation between rival ethnic/regional Afghan political groups and commanders, emergence of a balanced and broad-based stable government representing diverse ethnic, regional and minority interests, the setting up and effective functioning of law enforcement agencies, strengthening the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces by having a robust vetting process in place to prevent members of armed groups involved in crimes from being recruited by security or government institutions, on the speedy implementation of reconstruction of social, economic and education infrastructure, and on elimination of drugs and arms trafficking from Afghanistan.

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