

Afghanistan: Unabated Turmoil



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Afghanistan: Unabated Turmoil

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Welcome Remarks

Maj Gen Jamshed Ayaz Khan (Retd)*

I extend very warm welcome to all of you especially the participants, some of whom have had to travel long distances to be with us today — because international travel and visa problems have become a great hassle. I trust that the participants were well received and are comfortably housed. The temperatures in Islamabad are rising and power outage is a frequent occurrence.

Last year we had planned a three-day international seminar on *Regional Peace and Stability: South Asia*, from 31 October; but it had to be postponed for some unavoidable reasons, including the anticipated general elections.

Since Afghanistan being part of West Asia has now also become part and parcel of South Asia through its SAARC membership, we intended devoting a day to discussing

- The Afghanistan Cauldron — Resurgence of Taliban
- Genesis and Character of Tribal Areas and the Issue of Borderland Security and its linkage with Afghanistan.
- Impact of the Protracted Stay of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan.
- Afghanistan: Cost for Pakistan

*President, Institute of Regional Studies

That part of the seminar we are holding today and in autumn this year, we intend holding a two-day international seminar on the rest of South Asia, thus taking up and finishing the unfinished agenda of the original three-day seminar that was postponed last year.

Today, in the morning session, we have two foremost experts from the United States Dr. Barnett R. Rubin, who would speak on *Stabilizing Afghanistan in its region*; and Dr. Rodney W. Jones, his topic being *The Position and Importance of Afghanistan to the Future Peace and Stability of South Asia – A Cooperative Venture*. Col. Christopher Langton, of the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), London, who was all set to take part in the seminar last year, could not come owing to his commitments elsewhere but has emailed his paper nonetheless. Colonel Saffet Akkaya, from Turkey, would make a presentation on *NATO's Involvement in Afghanistan Crisis: Successes and Failures*.

In the afternoon session, we are lucky to have a leading expert on the Tribal Areas of Pakistan, Brig. Mahmood Shah, who would throw light on *Tribal Areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan: Interconnectivity and Spillover Effects*. A young scholar, Ms. Marvi Memon, would speak on *Afghanistan: Integration of counter insurgency, counter narcotics and development policies*. A well-known figure based in UK, Ms. Shadzadi Beg, would dilate on *The Ideological Battle*.

In the final session of the day a prominent academic, Dr. Rasul Bakhsh Rais, would make a presentation on *Afghanistan: Weak State and Regional Security*. Ms. Laura Schuurmans, a young scholar from Indonesia, would speak on *Peace and Stability, Good Governance & Development in Afghanistan*. A budding scholar of the IRS, Ms. Arshi Saleem Hashmi will make a presentation on *Afghanistan's Quandary: Significance of Regional States* and a Chinese scholar, Prof. Zhou Rong, will read his paper, *The way out for Afghanistan: A Chinese scholar's view*.

Each session of the day would be followed by an open discussion in which priority would be afforded to the participants. And in the concluding session, Ross Masud Husain, the seminar rapporteur, would sum up the day's proceedings.

I would like to highlight for all of you that Dr. Rasul Bakhsh Rais raises some very pertinent questions about Afghanistan like "Why has the character of the state been such a contentious issue and why shall it remain troublesome for the present and future coalitions? Why has it been so difficult to evolve a consensus among the Afghans about the kind of a state they would like Afghanistan to be? Why have foreign powers been so much interested in determining the future of this historically isolated country? What type of a state and nation Afghanistan is likely to be in the coming decades?" And his description of Afghanistan is very apt when he says Afghanistan is on the ethnic frontiers of regional states.

Afghanistan's current situation is ringing alarm bells in the western world. *The Guardian weekly* commented on May 2008 "There are clear warning signs that Afghan Mission (NATO) is at a turning point". And it added, "Afghanistan could well follow Iraq's path".

And I must add that for Afghanistan, these words of William Faulkner stick: *Past is never, it is not even past.*

Keynote Address

The Afghanistan Cauldron — Resurgence of the Taliban

Lt Gen Kamal Matinuddin (Retd)

Introduction

The situation in Afghanistan, appropriately called the Afghanistan Cauldron by the Institute of Regional Studies, is a matter of grave concern not only to the international community but more so to Pakistan. Pakistan is Afghanistan's immediate neighbour. It has historical, religious, ethnic and linguistic ties with the Afghans. It has always been affected by the developments in that war-ravaged country. Whether it was in the shape of the Saur Revolution or in the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan and the US-supported Afghan Jihad or in supporting the Taliban regime against the Northern Alliance, today Pakistan is caught up in the crossfire between the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda and the US-led forces in Afghanistan.

One cannot deny the fact that neither the US and its allies nor Pakistan alone can extinguish the fires that are raging there. It is only with the cooperative effort of all those nations who have a stake in the country's future that

headway can be made to bring the temperatures down to manageable limits.

While the objective of all is the same, namely to eliminate terrorism and religious extremism in the region, there are differences on ways of achieving it, particularly in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan. The major issues Pakistan is facing in FATA are:

- Pakistan's commitment to the War on Terror
- Causes for the Resurgence of the Taliban
- Reconstruction of Afghanistan
- The Peace Agreements

War on Terror: Pakistan's commitment

Two days after the fateful day of 9/11, US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage placed before Pakistan's director general of the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, Lt. Gen Mahmood Ahmed, who was on an official visit to the State Department those days, a piece of paper on which was written what Washington expected Pakistan to do in the US-led war against the Taliban regime. These were as follows:

1. Pakistan must stop al-Qaeda operators at the borders, intercept arms being supplied to them through Pakistan and end all logistic support to Osama bin Laden.
2. Give blanket overflight and landing rights to USAF planes.
3. Provide access to Pakistan naval and air bases.
4. Provide immediate intelligence information.
5. Condemn September 11 attacks. Curb all domestic expression of support for terrorism against the United States, its friends and allies.
6. Cut off all shipment of fuel to the Taliban and stop Pakistani volunteers from going into Afghanistan to join the Taliban.

7. Should the evidence strongly implicate Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan and should Taliban continue to harbour him and his network, Pakistan will break diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime and end support for the Taliban and assist us (USA) in ways to destroy Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network.

This is not negotiable, said Armitage.

The same day at 11:30 pm (PST) US secretary of state Colin Powell rang up President Pervez Musharraf and conveyed the same demands. Musharraf is reported to have responded by saying Pakistan would support the United States in each of these seven actions.

His immediate acceptance of the demands was criticized in many circles:

- Giving of bases to foreign forces was resented.
- Dislike for the Americans grew.
- This acceptance created greater sympathy for the Taliban specially in religio-political organizations.
- The U-turn made by Musharraf did not go down well amongst the tribes in the Tribal Areas.
- The possibility of employing the Pakistan Army in the Tribal Areas for military operation was not at all welcome.
- It gave the religious extremists a stick to beat the government with.
- It led to the influx of more Afghan refugees.

Despite these negative reactions Pakistan has fulfilled and continues to fulfil its commitment made soon after 9/11.

- Overflight permission was given.
- Naval and air bases were provided.
- Intelligence information is being shared.
- The 11 September attack was condemned.

- Logistic support to the Taliban regime was cut off.
- Pakistan broke off diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime and went to the extent of handing over Taliban's ambassador in Islamabad to the US against all diplomatic norms.
- The only demand which until today remains an issue is whether Pakistan should do more to stop infiltration across the Pak-Afghan international border.

Pakistan is accused of not doing enough to prevent the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda from moving in and out of the Tribal Areas to carry out raids inside Afghanistan against US and Afghan forces. They also believe that there are recruitment areas and training grounds in the Tribal Areas from where fighters are launched into Afghanistan

This semi-rugged mountainous region covers an area of 27,000 sq km. The 1,600-km long Durand Line cuts across mountain ranges but more than that it divides ethnic groups who, though living on either side of the international border, continue to have very close connections. They give very little significance to the border.

Besides the four important passes there are around a hundred ill-defined routes across the Pak-Afghan border, some inaccessible even to the paramilitary forces deployed in the area.

The tribes have their own system of dealing with issues. They strictly follow their own customs and tradition. Jirga or a collection of tribal elders being one of them to settle disputes. The inhabitants of the Tribal Areas pride themselves on their love for independence. They look you in the eye and do not accept imposition of any demand on them even if it be from a stronger power.

Despite these terrain difficulties and despite the special characteristics of those living in the Tribal Areas,

Pakistan has for the first time deployed the army in these no-go areas to carry out military operations. They have carried out several operations so far, Wana operations, Kaloochack, Shakai operations being some of them.

Today Pakistan has more than 100,000 troops in the Tribal Areas. They along with our intelligence agencies have captured or killed several militant leaders including Abu Zubaida, Ramzi Yusuf, Sheikh Abdur Rahman, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, Mustafa al Hussain, Yasser al Jazeera, Taufiq al Atash and Abu Farrag al Libbi. Pakistan has banned eight militant political parties and an Anti-Terrorist Act has been promulgated.

Even then it is true that there are foreigners still living in the Tribal Areas. It is also not wrong to assume that hardcore militants like Baitullah Mehsud still control around a thousand loyal followers. The possibility of training grounds and recruitment centres may still be there in the mountains and out of reach of the security forces

The Pakistan security forces have established around 1,000 checkpoints along the border, manned by around 60,000 troops. They have carried out several military operations and suffered more than 1,000 casualties. They have fenced a small stretch of the border to prevent infiltration and were willing to lay mines at major crossing points.

Though crossings have not been totally eliminated, they have been reduced to a large extent. The Army has been able to break the back of al-Qaeda network and the militants no longer are able to operate as an organized body. Pakistan alone, however, cannot achieve the objective of preventing cross-border movement. US and its allies are equally affected and so are responsible to do more. NATO forces number only 47,000, far less than what Pakistan has put in the field. They have only 400 checkpoints along the border, less than half of what the Pakistan Army is manning. If NATO is aware of the existence of the alleged training camps in the Tribal Areas then they should give the exact

location of these training camps or recruitment centres to the Pakistan Army, which will then make efforts to deal with them.

A tri-partite Commission comprising representatives of NATO, Afghan government and Pakistan meets every two months where these matters can be discussed, information exchanged and cooperation worked out for the operation to be conducted.

Causes of Taliban resurgence

Most western nations blame the signing of peace agreements as the cause of the resurgence of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Though there is some truth in this observation as the militants do not have to divide their attention between protecting themselves from the Pakistan Army action and persevering in their support of the Taliban and al-Qaeda operating in Afghanistan. But this is not the whole truth as there are other reasons for the rise in militancy in Afghanistan.

The incessant bombing by the US-led forces and the collateral damage caused with innocent men, women and children being killed, has increased the resentment against foreign forces. More than a thousand civilian casualties have occurred in 2007 alone. Even President Karzai has warned the NATO forces to avoid civilian casualties as the anger is directed against him as well.

The Afghans have always resisted the presence of foreign forces in their country be it the British, the Soviets or the Americans. Though the Northern Alliance considers them liberators, not so the Pushtuns. To many of them the US and their allied forces are occupiers. The longer they stay in Afghanistan the greater the demand for their withdrawal, notwithstanding the danger of a civil war breaking out in the wake of a NATO withdrawal.

Unwillingness or inability to correct the ethnic imbalance in government departments is also a cause for the

rise of anti-Karzai feelings amongst the Pushtuns who tilt towards the Taliban. Important ministries of defence, interior and foreign affairs are in the hands of the minority non-Pushtun elements.

There are not enough forces in Afghanistan to be able to check the rise of the Taliban. Some 40,000 troops are not enough to man the checkpoints along the border. More troops have to be deployed. Out of the above number only around 20,000 are available to deal with the Taliban; other employed for the protection of bases and for logistic support.

The War on Iraq diverted the attention from “Operation Enduring Freedom.” Ninety-three per cent of the world’s opium production still comes from Afghanistan. The US has not been able to reduce the cultivation of poppy . This means that money is available to the Taliban and those areas are out of control of the NATO forces.

According to the International Crisis Group’s February 2008 Report there is lack of coordination between the 30 or so nations providing forces in Afghanistan. Each nation has its own priorities and even objectives.

Outside support coming for the Taliban cannot be ruled out and could also be a cause for the resurgence. Slow pace of economic development and unwillingness to talk to the Taliban and relying so far on use of force could be some other factors.

Reconstruction and rebuilding

During her visit to Kabul US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice admitted that America had made a mistake by losing its focus on Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal. She was not only looking for a long-term commitment to the country but also hinted at a mid-course correction. She had realized that there was more work to be done than just eliminating the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda and capturing or killing Osama and Mullah Omar. The United States should have directed its energies and

resources towards state formation and rebuilding of Afghanistan.

Having been duly elected through a democratic process with absolute majority President Karzai should have had the confidence to turn his attention towards improving the quality of life of his people. Rice's pat on the back gave him the extra self-assurance he needed to remove all obstacles in the way of reconstruction of his war-ravaged country.

Karzai's immediate task was to correct the ethnic imbalance in his cabinet, which he was only able to partly achieve in the formation of the first cabinet. There was no backlash from those who dominated the scene soon after the removal of the Taliban regime. For the first time two women ministers were inducted into the government.

The second challenge Karzai faced was to disarm the militias and warlords. The disarmament, demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process was, however, not a simple affair as merely taking away weapons was not enough to ensure peace. Adequate funds had to be raised, alternative employment had to be provided, instructors had to be arranged, training had to be given and above all a peaceful environment had to be ensured. These were major challenges for the president.

Afghanistan did not have a modern police force for the last three decades. Although by February 2007 an estimated 40,000 policemen had completed a short training course. A sound legal system was also necessary to enable the police to arrest, investigate and prosecute criminals according to a laid down and acceptable law.

The new government had also to build a new 70,000-strong Afghan Army. By the end of 2007 around 30,000 personnel had been trained and equipped. The process was slow because a certain amount of identification and verification of those being recruited had also to be done to ensure that those joining the new army were not tainted with pro-Taliban sentiment.

The challenge for the new administration included the eradication or reducing the land under poppy.

NATO was able to put up 27 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The international community realized the need for providing the required funds for the rehabilitation and rebuilding of the country they had destroyed. But the pledges often are not all fulfilled.

Impact of peace agreements

The American and the EU and many other western nations are sceptical about Pakistan entering into a peace agreement with the militants. They refer to the upsurge in the insurgency in Afghanistan after the peace agreement was signed between the Pakistan government and the militants in September 2006.

Peace agreement per se is not a bad step as use of force alone cannot solve the problem. In fact prolonged military action and indiscriminate use of firepower only created enmity against the wielders of military power.

Talks, dialogue, negotiations and agreements are part of a democratic process. Pakistan's national interest demands that there is peace and stability in FATA and in the rest of the country. Continuous killing of own citizens even if they be militants by the army has an adverse effect on the morale of the troops, creates a distance between the army and civil society, results in unnecessary loss of life both to army personnel and to civilians, hardens positions on both sides and invites attacks on security personnel.

Even President Karzai believes that the talks with Taliban is acceptable. The British foreign secretary also is of the same view. The present prime minister is ready for talks with the militants provided they lay down their arms. The elected government in the NWFP is preparing a comprehensive plan to bring about peace in FATA including a multi-dimensional approach ranging from the use of force to economic development and social emancipation.

Agreement between the government and the militant tribes is not a new phenomenon. Even during the colonial times agreements were signed between the tribes and the British Indian government whereby the militants would agree to maintaining peace in return for subsidies given to them. Punishment for violation was in the form of withholding of payments and swift and short military action.

Proposed terms of the peace agreement

According to daily *Dawn*, Islamabad, the proposed peace agreement included:

- Taliban will expel foreign militants within one month
- Taliban will ensure that terrorists activities will not occur inside Pakistan
- Taliban will not allow their lands to be used for anti-state activities
- The Taliban will not target the government or security forces
- The Taliban will not damage equipment or property belonging to the government and the military
- The Taliban will not kidnap military or government officials
- The Taliban will not attack foreign or local workers participating in aid projects
- The Frontier Corps will maintain access to roadways
- The Taliban will not create a shadow government or institutions
- The Taliban will not interfere with development and humanitarian projects
- The political administration will verify any violation of the agreement

- Problems will be resolved through the local political administration
- The government maintains the right to act if the agreement is violated
- Both sides will exchange hostages and prisoners after the agreement has been signed
- The Pakistan Army will be withdrawn from the region

Comments

- The peace agreement must not be with an individual but with the tribal chiefs
- The agreement should state clearly that the Taliban will dismantle all training camps
- The Taliban will not recruit persons to go across the border
- The Pakistan Army will remove checkpoints but stay concentrated in certain areas

The peace agreements with the militants have both a positive and negative impact. Agreeing to many of the demands made by Baitullah Mehsud and other militants does bring about relative peace in the tribal areas as the attacks on military and security personnel are temporarily halted.

On the negative side, these agreements do allow the anti-US and pro-Taliban elements to concentrate on their jihad against the US and allied forces and against the Karzai government.

Positive impact

- A cease fire takes place
- It prevents further loss of blood on both sides
- The security forces can be reduced or concentrated in certain areas
- It cools down the temperature to a large extent
- It contributes towards winning over the militants

- If hostilities cease economic development can proceed
- Negotiations and agreements with other militants can also be worked out
- Political parties opposed to the use of force are pacified

Negative impact

- It does give time to the militants to regroup if their intentions are not sincere
- Infiltration across the border would increase as the militants do not have to worry about military operations to prevent them from crossing the border
- The militants can get emboldened as their demands are met

Conclusion

The war against the foreign and local militants in the Tribal Areas is far from over but how many more militants will Pakistan have to kill to prevent them from attacking its security forces and moving into Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban and al-Qaeda who are struggling to regain control of the country.

While the commitment to the war against terror remains, it is in the interest of Pakistan just as it is in the interest of global security that the tactics being followed should be reviewed from time to time to achieve a long-lasting peace with the misguided militants.

American and British taxpayers who are contributing to the war on terror, however, think otherwise. They still insist that the Tribal Areas are a safe haven and a training ground for international terrorists and the only policy which will eliminate the threat against them is to continue arresting and killing all suspected militants and their ringleaders. Even

if the information obtained by the western media is correct, the responsibility to remove the threat lies not with the Pakistan government alone but also with those who have occupied Afghanistan and those who are ruling the country today.

Washington is concerned only with securing its own national interests and saving American lives in Afghanistan with little or no regard for the troubles the US creates for those who give it a helping hand. An American author commented proudly the other day: "We evicted the Soviets from Afghanistan without the loss of even one American soldier." The fact that over 125,000 Afghans lost their lives during the Afghan jihad was of no concern to him.

To some extent they are justified as the American taxpayer is paying Pakistan for this job but let Pakistan do it its own way.

The situation in the Tribal Areas is not as simple as the US wants to believe. Prevention of cross-border movement cannot be achieved by Pakistan alone. The border has also to be sealed on the Afghan side by NATO and Afghan forces. Using military force against the militants till they are all killed or captured will not be possible. The Taliban and al-Qaeda are hydraheaded. You cut off one head and two others appear.

Anti-American sentiment is increasing because of the collateral damage caused by US aerial strikes on suspected high-profile targets in Pakistan territory. No government in Pakistan will accept US forces crossing into Pakistan. The Pakistan government has even hinted that if the US Congress does not appreciate Pakistan's present role in the Tribal Areas then they should look for another partner. Pakistan needs the support of the international community including the United States in its war against terror while western powers also need the support of Pakistan in eliminating the alleged threat to global security, which they believe emanates from the Tribal Areas. So let all parties work

together to resolve the problem of religious extremism and international terrorism.

Stabilizing Afghanistan in Its Region

Dr. Barnett R. Rubin

The difficulties faced by the US and NATO in Afghanistan have finally stimulated a discussion about the long-term objectives of the international community in that country. Some debate in Washington still consists of superficial blame games about insufficient NATO troops or national caveats by NATO troop contributors, but the arguments by critics about the overall insufficiency of the effort are finally sinking in and form part of the background for this year's electoral campaign.

The debate has identified several long-term, structural sources of instability: (1) the Afghan government's inability to finance and sustain national security forces adequate to the current threat environment; (2) the regional environment, principally determined by the Pakistan military's doctrine of excluding any hostile (i.e. Indian or pro-Indian) actors from areas of Afghanistan close to Pakistan; and (3) ambiguity about the intentions of the US – is it fighting to stabilize the region against the terrorist threat and then leave, or to establish a permanent foothold in the West Asian part of the Muslim world?

Afghanistan's economic, political, and military weakness means that stability requires international guarantees. But international guarantees that threaten the interests of powers with the capacity to destabilize Afghanistan will lead to a destabilising response. Since the formation of Afghanistan within its current borders and in its current structure as a centralized buffer state, the country has been stable when the competing big powers and regional powers agreed on a modus vivendi in Afghanistan, largely based on maintaining the isolation of the country, and hence minimising the stakes in controlling it. The military, political, social and economic transformations of the region over the last three decades preclude the re-establishment of such a status quo antes. Not only have most of the region's surrounding conflicts now manifested themselves inside Afghanistan (India-Pakistan, US-Iran, Iran-Saudi Arabia, Russia-NATO), but the country has become integrated into the world economy through migration and drug trafficking, and the presence of al-Qaeda and similar groups have eliminated the country's strategic isolation: its distance and geography no longer prevent Afghanistan or Pakistan's tribal agencies from serving as a base for global threats to the US or Europe. Stability today requires a much more demanding set of understandings among great powers and Afghanistan's neighbours.

Some US analysts, such as Colonel Thomas Lynch in an article in *The American Interest*, propose to stabilize Afghanistan through a binding, long-term, bilateral defence treaty between the US and Afghanistan. They argue that an unequivocal commitment such as the US has to Europe or Japan would calm Pakistan's concerns about India and the inconsistency of the US and force others to accept a Pax Americana in the region. I have argued that such a policy would be self-defeating, because of its failure to take into account the political effect of military deployments. A US commitment (or determination) to maintain military bases in a Muslim country on the Asian land mass, will also generate

– has already generated — resistance from Afghans, their neighbours, and Asian powers such as Russia, China and India. Long-term unilateral dependence on the US will undermine the legitimacy of the Afghan government, without which no amount of money will sustain its security forces. A long-term commitment to Afghanistan is needed but it can succeed only if it is a commitment to an independent national government embedded within a multilateral framework that assures that its neighbours and other great powers have a stake in its stability.

US commitment

The belief that the US will not remain in Afghanistan forever is one factor that Afghans and others in the region take into account in making political decisions; so is the belief that the US has goals in the region other than peace and stability in Afghanistan. A senior official of the Defence Department once admonished me (possibly ironically) for implying that the US might have intentions that were not utterly pure and benign. Even if this were true, it would not be wise to base strategic planning on the assumption that everyone thinks so. Other countries, too, debate whether to judge potential enemies — including the US — by intentions or capabilities. As in the US, the hardliners who argue that capabilities are more reliable indicators of threat than “intentions” often win battles in national security planning.

There are many reasons that Afghans and their neighbours believe: that (1) the US presence in Afghanistan is transitory; and (2) it has objectives other than the stability of Afghanistan. The primary reason is that both of these propositions are supported by facts.

The administration has financed the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through supplemental appropriations, indicating that it considers these commitments to be linked and temporary. Perhaps the next administration will delink Afghanistan from Iraq and fund the US commitment through

the regular budget. It will not, however, change the geographic location, cultural affiliation, or level of development of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is far from the United States, and our people and government have little knowledge or understanding of its society and culture. This lack of knowledge cannot be meaningfully addressed through short classes for troops or officials on six-month deployments and largely confined to offices and barracks for security reasons. Afghanistan is tied with a few African countries for last place as the poorest country on earth, and US institutions with their built-in high-cost structures show little capacity to operate effectively in such environments.

The US military and budget are badly overstretched. The dollar is falling against both oil and the Euro, and there is little indication that either of these related trends will be reversed soon. Consequently, international military deployments and commitments are becoming far more expensive. As the cost of international operations increases, the US is entering a recession with a weakening currency, increased oil dependency, financial markets in turmoil and growing domestic demand for fixing a badly frayed social safety net. (Perhaps this shows a lack of staying power on the part of the American people. In that case, as Berthold Brecht advised the East German Communists, perhaps we could dissolve the people and elect another.) Nonetheless the US is likely to face new challenges that will demand new commitments, for which additional resources are not likely to be available. One particularly scarce resource is trust and confidence in the US, which are now at their lowest point in history.

The US strategic planners may have faith that the US will emerge stronger and more determined than ever. The US should make Afghanistan-Pakistan and the entire region a much higher priority and devote more resources to it by scaling down other commitments, including leaving Iraq. But digging our way out from the hole excavated by the Bush-Cheney administration will be a long-term project that

cannot be accomplished through a treaty or an act of will, in Afghanistan or anywhere else.

The US should undertake a number of measures to strengthen its commitments to Afghanistan, but those commitments must be feasible and consistent with political realities in Afghanistan and the region. These include withdrawing from Iraq and transferring assets to Afghanistan, delinking the funding for Afghanistan from Iraq (as recommended by the Iraq Study Group), funding Afghanistan through the regular budget, and at least some of the changes in military posture as advocated by Lynch. But the US cannot overcome the persistent reasons for instability in Afghanistan by making commitments it cannot keep that will provoke growing resistance. Above all, the next administration must start what Senator Barack Obama has called a 'diplomatic surge' in the region to establish a genuine consensus on stability based on shared interests.

Stability and instability in Afghanistan

When Ahmad Shah Durrani was chosen as Shah of the Afghans at a jirga in Kandahar in 1747, he led the tribes first to conquer other territories that form part of today's Afghanistan and then on raids to plunder India. His predecessor Mirwais Khan Hotaki had instead plundered Iran.

These actions did not arise from any supposedly violent and xenophobic Afghan character, but from the fact that the territory of Afghanistan did not produce enough wealth to finance a state. When the expansion of European imperial powers (Britain and Russia) into the region made external raiding impossible, Afghanistan went through a period of instability and war. The country became stable in its current de facto borders (never accepted de jure by any Afghan government including the Taliban) as a subsidized buffer state.

Bilateral agreements between Afghanistan and Britain formalized the subsidy, and a bilateral agreement between Britain and Russia formalized the country's status as a buffer state. The subsidy enabled the Amir to build an army and police that gained and administered control of the territory. The agreement between Britain and Russia assured that neither imperial power would use Afghanistan against the other. The subsidy provided the Afghan state with a domestic preponderance of resources, and the diplomatic agreement among the regional powers assured that neither would use its resources to subvert the state.

Simply put, the two necessary ingredients for stability as a state in the border of today's Afghanistan are: (1) international aid or subsidies provided to a legitimate Afghan state, and (2) political consent by those capable of subverting that state (key sectors of the Afghan population, neighbours and great powers) to the political arrangement inside Afghanistan. Rapid economic growth that provides a tax base for adequate security forces is at best a very long-term scenario. The cost of security depends on the threat environment: the more domestic legitimacy and the less international opposition to the Afghan state, the fewer subsidies it needs to maintain itself in power.

Since 1978, there has been no international consensus on the political arrangements in Afghanistan, and the political and military mobilisation of broad sectors of the population has increased the power required to rule, power that can be generated by a combination of coercion and legitimacy. (The rule of law combines both in the exercise of coercion according to legitimate rules.)

Domestic legitimacy

Both public opinion data and my own experience with Afghans indicate that the political consensus in the country still leans toward accepting rather than rejecting the international military presence, though views are more

hostile in those areas directly affected by combat, mostly along the border with Pakistan, where the insurgents are based. But it would be a mistake to think that such attitudes can or will endure enough to constitute a basis for a long-term presence.

The more common attitude is like that of the restaurant customer who complained that not only was the food terrible, the portions were also too small. Afghans do not much like the food/foreign presence, even if they are starving for security and have to eat it. Afghans do not like their country being occupied by foreign soldiers any more as did their ancestors; but after the experience of 1978-2001, many concluded that being occupied by the US was the only alternative to being destroyed by their neighbours. At least the US would improve their standard of living.

The reality of US and other Western troops in Afghanistan and the failure of the foreigners to improve the standard of living of the poor majority of Afghans, especially in areas affected by insurgency, have led to a decrease in support for the international presence. There are surveys that provide statistical evidence of this, as do incidents. Young men, largely from the most anti-Taliban group in Afghanistan, rioted against the foreign presence in Kabul in May 2006 after a brake failure in a US convoy led to a fatal traffic accident. Another anecdote also involves brake failure. The 16-year-old cousin of an Afghan who works with me sometimes in Kabul was approaching a US checkpoint on his bicycle. The soldiers shouted for him to halt, but this Afghan bicycle had no brakes, so the cousin started to drag his feet on the ground. This was too slow for the US soldiers, who shot and killed the boy. The Americans then took the body and kept it for three days (a grave offense in Islam) while the family camped outside the base. They finally returned the body. The village elders met and decided to join the Taliban to fight the Americans. They also told my Afghan colleague that as long as he was working for the government in Kabul, he could not return to the village. So

this entire village has joined the Taliban, though it would be a stretch to characterize it as a “bedrock partner” of al-Qaeda.

The US soldiers may have feared that the bicycle rider was a suicide bomber and obeyed their rules of engagement and the international laws of war. Nonetheless, their act generated hatred and resistance. There have been many such incidents, each of which is amplified by rumour and propaganda. American soldiers are usually as humane as it is possible to be when one’s life is endangered in alien surroundings. There is no way to eliminate such incidents – and most measures to reduce them involve greater risk for the US soldiers.

This event has a positive lesson as well: many of those fighting against the US and NATO in Afghanistan are not “bedrock partners” of al-Qaeda. They are fighting for other reasons, including finding the effects of foreign occupation increasingly intolerable. Therefore, a political approach to the “Taliban” insurgency is possible: but it may require decreasing, not increasing, the foreign military presence. In any case, the US and the NATO should refrain from raising the stakes and must distinguish carefully between their full range of objectives, as set forth in the Afghanistan Compact, and those objectives for which they are prepared to continue to fight a war.

The international civilian presence also undermines the legitimacy of the Afghan government. Restaurants that serve alcohol or serve as covers for brothels, neighbourhoods blockaded for security, skyrocketing cost of living partly due to the cash spent by foreign residents serve as symbols of Afghan powerlessness just as civilian casualties do. These in turn have an impact on the Afghan state’s legitimacy through mechanisms often invisible to outsiders. As Afghan clergy increasingly preach that the foreign presence is an illegitimate occupation threatening Islam, some are also reported to refuse Muslim funeral rites to Afghan soldiers killed fighting the insurgency alongside the US or the NATO

troops. I do not know how common this is, but if I have heard it, so have a lot of other people. Few things could be more damaging to morale and recruitment.

Of course an ideal US presence would not pressure the Afghan government to act against its national interest. The actual one does, however, not only in domestic policy but also in relation to Afghanistan's neighbours.

Iran and Pakistan

The US analysts sometimes do not understand how others perceive the US. Lynch, for instance, claims that a unilateral US open-ended commitment to Afghanistan "is certain to generate some regional controversy, but its positive potential outcomes outweigh the risks from vocal but likely temporary Russian, Pakistani or Iranian unhappiness." He misidentifies the problem. The regional actors do not and will not believe that the US is committed to Afghanistan as they believe that the US will make Afghanistan committed to the US and its interests, which may be hostile to their's.

The case of Iran illustrates the point. The closest the US has come to Lynch's proposal is the declaration of Strategic Partnership, signed by Presidents Bush and Karzai at the White House in May 2005. Tehran responded by asking President Karzai to sign a declaration of strategic partnership with Iran. Among the provisions of the proposed agreement were clauses committing Afghanistan not to permit its territory to be used for military or intelligence operations against Iran. The message from Iran was clear: we will accept Afghanistan's strategic partnership with the US only if it is not directed against Iran.

President Karzai's initial reaction was that he would like to sign such a declaration, but that his government was not in a position to prevent the US from using its territory against Iran, though it hoped it would not. The Iranians said that they knew that, but would like such a statement anyway.

A phone call to President Karzai from a cabinet officer in Washington forbade the Afghan government from signing any such declaration. In January 2006, another phone call from Washington forbade President Karzai to travel to Tehran to sign some economic agreements. US officials claimed that Iran was trying to use its bilateral relations with Afghanistan to strengthen its position in the negotiations over its nuclear programme, and Washington gave priority to the latter over considerations affecting Afghanistan.

Later in 2006, a high-level Iranian delegation came to Afghanistan to help the parties that were formerly part of the Northern Alliance to form a more solid opposition group in the National Assembly. There were many reports that Iran was rearming its former allies. In the spring of 2007, the US claimed to find evidence that Iran had started to provide anti-aircraft missiles and shaped charges to the Taliban, whom Iran had always opposed and fought. As rhetoric calling for a pre-emptive attack on Iran in response to its nuclear policy escalated in Washington, and well-known administration supporters called for “regime change,” Tehran made a formal decision: if Iran were attacked by the US, it would respond fully against US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, regardless of its bilateral interests in those two countries. Iran continued to send signals of what damage it could do, though the US National Intelligence estimate stating that Iran had ended its nuclear weapons programme at least temporarily calmed the escalation.

This account shows that the Iranian response to threats posed by a US presence in Afghanistan will be more than “vocal.” Iran can respond asymmetrically – and potentially devastatingly – against the US in Afghanistan. How Iran responds to a US commitment to and long-term presence in Afghanistan depends on US policy toward Iran.

The core issue, as always, is Pakistan. After years of denial and continual expressions of confidence in General Musharraf, most in Washington now recognize that the Pakistan military’s policy in Afghanistan has had at least two

tracks. That this policy has mainly been determined by the Pakistan' military's security concerns about India and the long-standing hostile relations between Kabul and Islamabad.

The Bush administration has treated these problems as if they resulted either from a personal misunderstanding between Hamid Karzai and Pervez Musharraf (to be settled around a dinner table) or the result of the Pakistan military's fear of an Islamist reaction. Like most US administrations, this one largely accepted the self-interest blackmail proffered by Islamabad, claiming that Pakistan was on the verge of being taken over by the Taliban and al-Qaeda, were it not for the moderate, pro-Western military. Hence attempts to change the policy largely consisted of dialogue with, pressure on, or reassurances of the Pakistani military, enabling it to have a free hand. On the one hand, it hunted down enough al-Qaeda in the FATA to satisfy the US, while maintaining the viability of the Afghan Taliban in Waziristan and, above all, Balochistan, in order to retain an instrument of pressure on the US. In short, the Pakistan military's strategy has depended on the maintenance of problems for the US that only the Pakistan military can solve. Hence, in General Zia's words, "The water in Afghanistan must boil at the right temperature."

Some in the US suggest more pressure on Pakistan or an attempt to persuade Afghanistan to recognize the Durand Line. While the settlement of issues concerning the frontier between the two countries is necessary, this will include transformation of the FATA as well as agreement on the border, and will be the outcome, rather than the precondition for, stabilisation of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations.

Transforming the security complex in South Asia will result from political change, of which the centrepiece must be the democratisation of Pakistan, including civilian control of national security strategy. There are many actors in Pakistan who contest the military's definition of national security, but they have had no power over national security

issues in Pakistan's praetorian state, even when they elected prime ministers. The Bush administration's insistence on the persistence of Musharraf to assure that the Pakistan military carries out its self-defeating and poorly conceived counter-terrorism operations with continued or even increased vigour, amounts to an insistence on keeping the Pakistan military semi-autonomous under the US oversight, rather than accountable to Pakistani civilian authorities. This assures exclusion from Pakistani national security policy of those most interested in changing it.

The Pakistani military will not consent to a stable Afghanistan under the US hegemony, because it fears that the US will align with India the moment it no longer needs Pakistan to address terrorism or instability in Afghanistan. The Pakistan military cannot agree to a definition of Pakistan national security that is not based on the Indian threat because that threat, in addition to being based on reality rather than fantasy, provides the rationale for the military's domination of Pakistan's state, society, and economy.

A strategic approach to addressing the longstanding hostility between Afghanistan and Pakistan is essential to success in Afghanistan. Anything that reduces Indo-Pakistan tension and threat perceptions will help. The key, however, is inside Pakistan. If Pakistan will not respect a border that Afghanistan does not recognize, Afghanistan cannot recognize a border for which Pakistan does not take responsibility. Improving relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan requires the political and administrative integration of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas with Pakistan. All the parties that form part of the new governing coalition in the Pakistan parliament support such integration, as do the two parties that will form the government of the Northwest Frontier Province and that dominated the nominally non-party elections in the FATA. The military and presidency have opposed such integration, though they do so indirectly by saying it is impossible or too difficult. The use of the FATA as a staging ground for asymmetrical warfare forms

part of the Pakistan military's security doctrine and can be addressed only by a civilian government. Such integration will require military action to overcome resistance, especially since the global headquarters of a revived al-Qaeda is now located in the FATA, but political integration with Pakistani democracy will provide a political framework for such action far more acceptable than supporting the Bush administration's "War on Terror."

Beyond commitment

First, decide what our goals are. One of the most common questions I hear from Afghans linked to the insurgency is, "What does the US want in Afghanistan?" People in the region wonder if the US is using the conflict in Afghanistan as an excuse to stay in the region for other purposes. A particularly convoluted but widespread belief of this sort is that the US is supporting the Taliban through its puppet regime in Islamabad so that it can keep troops in Afghanistan. Is the US in Afghanistan to stabilize the country and eventually leave? No one believes that the US wants a permanent presence in Afghanistan solely to stabilize that country in the interest of the Afghans.

This requires choices the US has not made. It is not possible to stabilize Afghanistan or to put meaningful pressure on Pakistan while the US-Iran cooperation in Afghanistan (which was essential to the initial military success in 2001) is held hostage to other aspects of the relationship. Lack of the US-Iran cooperation and growing tensions with Russia and China in Central Asia give Pakistan a monopoly on controlling US access to landlocked Afghanistan.

Second, supporting the transformation of Pakistan's definition of security means relinquishing, not strengthening, the privileged relationship between the US and the Pakistan military, and supporting democracy and civilian control,

even by parties that oppose US objectives openly (rather than covertly, like the military).

Third, the US, other developed countries, the Muslim world, and Afghanistan's neighbours must invest far more in Afghanistan's economy and civilian institutions, especially those for rule of law. Strengthening the legitimacy of the Afghan government works best when pursued through a multilateral framework, not a unilateral one. The Afghan government that was formed at the UN talks on Afghanistan in Bonn (where I was a member of the UN delegation) enjoyed far greater legitimacy than the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq or its elected successors.

Fourth, as a component of strengthening civilian institutions, we should fully support efforts by the Afghan government to negotiate and reconcile with insurgents, making it clear that our concern is threats to international security, not weakening Islamic political forces. Most of those fighting the government are not allies of al-Qaeda or supporters of its global agenda, though the resources provided by and through al-Qaeda and its partners make the insurgency far more deadly.

Fifth, launch regional consultations (a "diplomatic surge") to develop a common understanding of the future of Afghanistan in the region with all the neighbours, including Iran, Russia, China, Pakistan India, and the Central Asian and Persian Gulf countries. Both the UN and regional organisations offer forums for pursuit of these objectives. Afghanistan can no longer be an isolated buffer state but it can serve as a connector of a wider region through trade, transit, energy transmission, and labour migration as long as it is not a source of threats. Integrating Afghanistan as a focal point for regional cooperation is not compatible with making it a base for power projection. The US long-term presence in Europe is made possible by the substantial overlap in membership between the security alliance – NATO – and the framework for economic and political cooperation — the European Union. Without a similar

convergence of security and economic interests, a US presence will be destabilising rather than stabilising.

Sixth, external support for the Afghan security forces and the civilian parts of the budget as well must be institutionalized. It would be preferable to make such support more multilateral and to devise a scenario for eventual self-sufficiency. Such a scenario would combine threat reduction, economic development, and state building. At the very least funding for Afghan security forces should be de-linked from Iraq and integrated with the regular defence budget. No country can build institutions on the basis of a foreign country's supplemental appropriations. A smaller but reliable commitment is better than a huge unpredictable one. Together with consultations on Afghanistan's role in the region's security, the US should seek to structure Afghan forces to act independently, rather than as auxiliaries of the US and NATO, so that they do not appear to threaten the region.

Afghanistan can no longer be isolated and separate West Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia. Both the violent and peaceful, licit and illicit aspects of globalisation guarantee that. The same location that made it an effective buffer state can now make it an effective connector state among regions of Asia, some of which are now experiencing a sustained economic boom. The condition for such economic integration, however, is assuring that a stronger and more open Afghanistan does not constitute a threat to anyone. The US, Europe, Russia and China need guarantees that Afghanistan and the FATA will not be used by al-Qaeda or similar organisations for attacks on them. Pakistan needs guarantees that India will not use Afghanistan against it. Iran needs clear guarantees that the US is not seeking to overthrow the Islamic regime by force, from Afghanistan or elsewhere.

The democratization of Pakistan is essential to this process. Part of the perception of "Indian threat" from Afghanistan derives from a military mindset that sees ethno-

nationalist politics in Pakistan's provinces as a threat to national security, rather than a normal part of political competition in a diverse nation. A government such as the current one, with representatives from all provinces and groups, and a commitment above all to the economic well-being of the people of Pakistan, will naturally tend to define the country's national interest in terms of stability and economic cooperation, rather than as pursuit of an Islamic imperial mission modelled on the Mughals or Ghaznavids, whose rulers have given their names to Pakistan's nuclear delivery systems. A democratic Pakistan pursuing the interests of its citizens, rather than a militarized national mission, providing space for the non-violent pursuit of Islamic or ethnic politics, will enable Afghanistan in turn to find the breathing space it needs to move in a similar direction.

Afghanistan: Weak State and Regional Security

Dr Rasul Bakhsh Rais

Introduction

The three cycles of wars that Afghanistan has experienced over the past thirty years have wiped out its accumulated institutional and political heritage and caused a serious disruption in its natural evolution. Among other motives and interests that the Afghan groups and foreign actors involved in the conflict pursued, was to define and shape the future of Afghanistan according to their own power, security and strategic interests. The wars over such a long period of time demonstrate how difficult and complex it becomes to reorder a state and society once its historical flow and social capacities to balance competing interests have been lost. The quest for reordering Afghanistan has involved two interventions by the two superpowers of modern times as well as several bouts of internal struggles and civil wars amongst various Afghan factions which had a stake in the future of the country.

Why has defining the character of the state been such a contentious issue and why will it remain troublesome for

the present and future coalitions? Why has it been so difficult to evolve a consensus among the Afghans about the kind of state they would like Afghanistan to be? Why have foreign powers been so much interested in determining the future of this country? What type of a state and nation Afghanistan is likely to be in the coming decades? These are not easy questions to answer, but can provide a basis for some discussion, and perhaps help us understand the structural issues that have impeded state progress and nationhood in Afghanistan. The present broad international coalition of forces which wants to establish peace in Afghanistan and help in its reconstruction, represents the deep interest and desire to transform the country from a failed state to a normal, governable and effective state. This endeavour cannot and should not be dismissed as expedient, temporary or shaped by the merely negative motive of punishing a regime that hosted America's worst enemies. It is a serious nation-building project, which might have faults, but undoubtedly it has a clear vision—to pull Afghanistan out of the anarchic chaos produced by the absence of state and internecine internal conflicts.

Before we discuss what is really at stake for the Afghans, the regional states and international community at large, it would be necessary to contextualise the ongoing nation-building project in Afghanistan within its history and geography. In doing so, let us make two raw propositions that rest on these factors, which in our view have consistently impinged upon Afghanistan's struggle for a modern statehood:

- a) Afghanistan's progress towards establishing a modern state started late with a meagre institutional endowment with a convenient 'rentier' mindset.
- b) The 'frontier' character of the state placed limitations on what the Afghan nation-builders aspired and narrowed the scope of what

realistically could be achieved in a highly constraining environment.

These two characteristics might have had overlapping effects on the quality of Afghanistan's statehood, though essentially in different ways and in varying degrees. Let us briefly touch on the first proposition. There is now a good amount of literature on why the state in Afghanistan was not able to adequately strike roots deep in the Afghan society and why its institutional reach has remained confined to only a few areas of the country. One of the most impressive and arguably better explanation of institutional deficit of the Afghan state is by Barnett Rubin. Professor Rubin traces it to the habit of the Afghan elites and ruling oligarchy to depend on outside support to carry out primary functions of the state, including social and economic development.⁽¹⁾ They avoided difficult policies like collecting revenues from the public, framing appropriate development strategies and building political trust between the state and the society.

The difficulty, in the case of a rentier state, lies in the state's failure to assume corresponding obligations towards the society against what it takes from it. These obligations are accountability, responsiveness and transparency in the allocation of the public funds. A state by not depending on the society and instead acquiring economic and political energies from outside sources has a natural tendency to become 'autonomous', which means that it is less answerable to the public and independent of the society.⁽²⁾ Therefore, being autonomous, it excludes the society from collectively making political choices. By the logic of its separate but parallel existence, the state and society fail to develop the mutual bond that defines modern nation states.

Afghanistan is not the only country that might be considered 'rentier' or 'autonomous', but it is unique in a sense, because unlike other rentier states it has failed to sustain itself, let alone grow out of dependence. This failure occurred at a critical juncture when the Afghan state could be considered to be evolving from an ancient kingdom to a

nation state in the post-colonial global power structure in the late 1960s. By then it had embarked upon a course of institutional development in different areas of national life, aided by earlier modernization efforts and the fresh attempts towards development undertaken by its monarchy and relatively small modernist elite present in the state institutions.⁽³⁾

Politically, Afghanistan became relatively more open with the introduction of the 1964 Constitution followed by two elections. Alongside debate and discussion in educational institutions, local media and informal political organizations demonstrated a clear departure from the old political climate of fear and restraint. There was latent political energy and eagerness among the new educated classes and intellectual circles to influence the direction of political change in the country. It also showed that they had varied ideas on issues like identity, ideology and the developmental path Afghanistan would take. Greatly influenced by political ideas and movements within the region and beyond, the Afghans became divided into three ideological camps, which can be loosely defined as — traditionalists, Islamists, modernists and socialists.

Although the modernists and the socialists had different ideas about their vision of Afghanistan, they shared a common threat perception in the rise of Islamist ideology and its growing popularity among students and traditional class of mullahs (clergy), which was reflected in their greater numbers in the 1969 elections. The 1973 coup led by Sardar Mohammad Daoud reflected the common anxieties and shared vision of nationalists, modernists and socialists. The dream of transforming Afghanistan from a monarchy to a republic was short-lived. Internal rifts among the coalition partners, fatally incompatible outlooks and growing militancy weakened Daoud and his hold on power. Finally, it was the socialist wing of the National Army encouraged and supported by their Soviet handlers that captured power through a coup in April 1978.

The socialist revolution was the beginning of the end of the modern state that the Afghans wanted to construct. It was a very bold but unrealistic attempt to reorganize the state, society and economy of Afghanistan which the Afghans had known and lived through for centuries. The coup-makers in the conventional rhetoric of the textbook revolutionaries saw every piece and aspect of Afghanistan as offensive, unwanted, rotten and requiring a surgical change. This misreading of Afghanistan's history, society and social relations made them foreigners in their own state. Their presence in the power structure, overtly propped up by the Soviet Union, was seen as being offensive to the Afghan sense of nationhood and nationalism, and consequently provoked a nationwide resistance against the Afghan socialists and their patron, the former Soviet Union.

This episode of Afghanistan's tragedy is well documented. There are many different interpretations about the motives of internal and external organizers of resistance against the socialists and the Soviet occupier, but there is a general consensus that in this conflict hardly any one emerged as a victor.⁽⁴⁾ The Afghans suffered the greatest human and material loss with one million dead and about half of the population dislocated internally or externally, millions of them for ever. However, the greatest casualty of the war was the Afghan state; it was critically debilitated as political and ideological fissures between Afghan groups which wanted to transform it according to their respective visions, further widened.

The story of Afghanistan's destruction cannot be complete or the tragedy of state destruction meaningfully analyzed without understanding the 'frontier' character of Afghanistan. It is perhaps the only state in the world which has ethnic majorities of its people living in neighbouring states, Afghanistan itself retaining only their rump. In terms of ethnicity of its constituent elements, Afghanistan is on the ethnic frontiers of regional states. The country was born out of dying empires in 1747. What had helped its birth was the

frontier character of the Pushtun tribes as much as the geographic marginality of the new kingdom. As an accident of history, it also found itself on the expanding frontiers of two European imperial powers, Russia and Britain, about one hundred years later. By then, the two imperial powers had firmly established themselves, one in the north and the other in the south of the country. Experiencing a severe deficiency of power, Afghanistan found itself in a geopolitical nutcracker, with hardly much room to move, manoeuvre and shape its future independent of the wishes of the two great imperial powers.

Interestingly, Afghanistan was spared direct occupation by either of them. Britain, relatively more proactive, and regionally stronger, succeeded in controlling its foreign affairs, relegating it to a glorious princely state on the patterns of hundreds of such states under the Raj in the subcontinent. Seen in the backdrop of the 'great game', Russia and Britain did not want to share colonial borders, fearing that their suspicions, fears and anxieties might lead them to a costly conflict. With a very clear motive they settled the Afghanistan issue by conceiving it as a 'buffer' that would keep the two at some distance. However, Britain not completely complaisant with this arrangement and relatively more fearful than Russia, kept a strong vigil over Afghanistan's internal situation, occasionally interfering to correct any deviance from the dotted lines. Hence, Afghanistan, in more than one way, was a 'frontier' state and this negatively affected its institutional development, and international status. Moreover, Afghanistan's status as a frontier state also helped the continuation of the traditional domination of the Pushtun king and Pushtun-dominated oligarchy, which thwarted the country from achieving a semblance of internal consolidation amongst its various ethnic groups.

Afghanistan claimed its independence unilaterally in 1919, which was affirmed *de jure* through the Treaty of Rawalpindi in 1921. It was a very significant event in the

history of the country as it was free for the first time in eighty years and was able to independently shape its foreign and domestic policies under an enlightened Amir, Amanullah Khan. His modernization programme and social development agenda, inspired by modernists in Iran and Turkey, failed to appeal to the traditional sectors of the society. Before his opponents could get strong enough to disrupt this programme, he succeeded in sowing the seeds of modern Afghanistan in the vital sectors of education, national army, documentation of economy and development of a modern bureaucracy. Modernization under Amanullah Khan was the first decisive attempt to change Afghanistan's ancient regime—an attempt to build its future along modern lines.⁽⁵⁾

Afghanistan's problems didn't end with reassertion of sovereignty over foreign affairs. The roots of many challenges it faced were mainly domestic in nature. There were dynastic rivalries, ethnic fragmentation, weak governance and the writ of the state limited to cities. Up to the middle of the 20th century Afghanistan was still a nominal state, much of its population living under traditional structures of authority, local community leaders, tribal chiefs. In the vast rural periphery the officialdom was in a relatively subordinate position to the locally influential figures. The real move toward state-building started under King Zahir Shah with a great deal of international assistance from varied foreign sources. This influenced the nature of the emerging state — its 'rentier', and oligarchic disposition.

With new opportunities and international contacts, Afghanistan's regional environment also changed significantly with the departure of the British from the subcontinent. It now faced an independent India — the land historically its national heroes and warriors had fancied and invaded with regular frequency for centuries. A greater change for Afghanistan was the emergence of the new state of Pakistan across the Durand Line with a larger population of Pushtuns on its side than on the other. The regional

changes, the Cold War power structure and the competitive globalism of the two superpowers had greatly influenced Afghanistan's internal dynamics and its foreign policy.

The question which arises is that how did the new geopolitical configuration change the fundamental character of Afghanistan as a 'frontier' state? I would argue that it not only altered the fundamental character of the Afghan state, it also added complexity to its relationship with both its neighbouring states as well as the great powers. Afghanistan's location at the intersection of three strategic regions aroused natural interest of all its neighbours concerning its state and nationhood, its political preferences and the foreign policy choices it made. For this reason, some of the neighbouring states have been, voluntarily or otherwise, involved in influencing the political direction of Afghanistan. This involvement has been both defensive — to prevent adversarial states taking control of the country — and offensive in order to keep other regional rivals out.

Far deadlier for Afghanistan, was the ideological and strategic rivalry between the superpowers during the second wave of Cold War that was significantly fuelled by the Soviet occupation of the country and national resistance against communism. Consequently, becoming a battleground of active hostility between the superpowers proved disastrous for the Afghan state and society. Afghanistan lost the traditional social balance, institutions and the state that could provide security, stability and national cohesion.

As the complex conflict prolonged and social and state institutions of Afghanistan began to disintegrate, the resultant power vacuum sucked in dangerous transnational militant groups with a globalist agenda. The use of Afghanistan as a sanctuary and as a base to operate from and strike at targets beyond Afghanistan has motivated distant powers to restructure Afghanistan's state and nationhood. Their military intervention and subsequent reconstruction efforts are premised on the belief that a stateless Afghanistan could pose a major threat to international stability and

security. The Afghan groups, regional states and international players, all have a stake in the future of Afghanistan. In such a situation it would be a daunting task to speculate about the future of Afghanistan in the coming years or decades. Little can be said with any certainty about the future of any state even if we had perfect information and appropriate analytical tools to do that exercise. In case of Afghanistan it would certainly be futile. We may however speculate three alternative futures for Afghanistan which will have tremendous impact on the stability and security of the entire region, including its immediate neighbours. We can hypothesize three alternative futures for Afghanistan: effective statehood, fragmentation and nominal state.

a) Effective statehood

The present chapter of Afghanistan's political history started with the ouster of the Taliban by the international coalition of forces led by the United States and authorised by the United Nations. Removing a weak and vulnerable regime that ruled through fear and use of repression was perhaps the easiest part. The Taliban militia were no match for the most modern force which used the deadliest weapon system to destroy their war-fighting capability. The Taliban were quite aware of what they were up against. Most of their commanders, if not the entire fighting force, were battle-hardy and had gained tremendous experience of guerrilla warfare against the former Soviet Union. The unanticipated heavy bombardment on their fixed positions caused great damage to the Taliban militia in the North, where they had been fighting against the Northern Alliance forces. However, soon they began to dissolve in the local populations to prepare for the kind of war the Afghan terrain favours — the insurgency.

The regime change in the country through use of force was presented to the Afghans as a way out of their internal feuds and troubles with the promise of state- and nation-building. Both the war and post-conflict reconstruction were conceived as a multi-national and a

multi-institutional effort towards a common goal of securing and reviving the country. For more than six years the international community has been involved in rebuilding Afghanistan as a normal and effective state. This is still a work in progress, as it remains unfinished and continues to face many challenges.

Let us briefly examine what Afghanistan and the international community have accomplished so far in reviving the Afghan state and society. The post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan has borrowed heavily from the modernist theory, and has the hindsight benefits of similar efforts in rebuilding failed states and troubled societies in other parts of the world. However, post-conflict reconstruction is a difficult process for many reasons. The societies where conflicts take place might have different social structures; the nature of internal combatants and their social support bases, regional environment and responses of the neighbouring states and the effects on the state and society might vary. Therefore, the policy instruments and the rebuilding packages may have significant common points but at the same time would have to address the uniqueness of each situation. In this respect, Afghanistan is a distinct case of post-conflict reconstruction because of the three cycles of war that it experienced over a period of three decades and the impact the war left on social relations, ethnicity and traditional institutions and authority structures.

There was hardly any remnant of political or state institution left that could provide a base to rebuild the Afghan state. We often use the expression of reconstruction to explain post-Taliban development, but in a sense it is misleading because it conveys the impression that old structures of power are being rebuilt or revived. It is a fresh and bold effort to build a new Afghanistan without much borrowed from its past political experience. The focal point of reconstructing new Afghanistan is an effective statehood — the political and institutional capacity to exercise sovereign writ and control over all of its territories, leaving

no space ungoverned. Undoubtedly, it is an ambitious objective, and one that cannot be accomplished without adequate, sustained and long-term international cooperation and assistance. There may not be an agreement on this, but I sense the international community understood the enormity of the Afghan situation and the threat it posed if the country was left on its own. Before we proceed any further, we should make it clear that the reconstruction efforts that the United States, European Union, and the rest of international community have launched in Afghanistan are driven by their self-interest rather than notions of compassion, sense of moral obligation or benevolence. These values didn't matter much before the country became a base of transnational militants for operating against the Western and regional countries.

It seems that the state- and nation-building in Afghanistan is an integrated, comprehensive and holistic enterprise. It has involved all dimensions and aspects of the state from political, administrative, judicial institutions to provision of services and reconstruction of the economic infrastructure. Because of the nature of the destruction, political fragmentation, and multiple conflicts that left stubborn legacies, the larger questions of security and development had to have two essential elements: The first and foremost issue was how to create a unified Afghan government representing all ethnic groups of the country that would assume control of the country in the wake of Taliban defeat, or what now appears to be merely their retreat. It required a concerted international effort, through the United Nations, to invite Afghan groups in a conference. Through great deal of persuasion, nudging and influence, the Afghans agreed upon the 'Bonn Process,' which among other things established the interim government. The international backing and the consensus reached among the Afghan groups provided some semblance of legitimacy to the new power structure in Kabul.

Since then Afghanistan has made significant progress in drafting a new Constitution, convening a *Loya Jirga* to ratify the Constitution, holding of presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections.⁽⁶⁾ In the backdrop of institutional and national power vacuum, these cannot be regarded as a meagre achievement. Political reconstruction in Afghanistan and in other post-conflict societies has been the key element in assisting the larger process of nation- and state-building. It is a key in the sense that every other aspect of state and society must grow out of the national consensus among the main societal components, elites, or key players, whatever name you prefer for them.

The very idea of a constitutional and representative government, no matter how flawed the procedural aspects might be, is transformative and revolutionary in the social and economic conditions of Afghanistan. It has provided Afghanistan with a legal, normative base to build a new state for itself. Building a judicial and legal system, training and reorganising a bureaucracy, police and a national army have also been in the focus of this effort. All state institutions with faded shades and traces of the old structures are gradually evolving. Their capacity, growth, effectiveness and success will eventually determine the effectiveness of the Afghan state.

The other important element of state-building, which is fundamentally relevant to its stability, societal peace and efficacy, is the economic revival. That is not possible without rebuilding communications, roads, power generation, and agricultural infrastructure. Social services like education and health are yet another important state function without which desperate Afghan populations, devastated by conflict and physical dislocations cannot be won over by the new state. Progress or failure of the Afghan state in all these areas is as much a credit and responsibility of the Afghan leaders as it is of the international community that appears to have committed a lot but delivered very little

on time and in places where the economic assistance was needed the most.

Overall, the achievements of the Afghans and the international community are mixed, and many aspects of reconstruction are in the transitional phase. There is a great deal of critiquing the reconstruction priorities, failures in implementation of projects, corruption and mismanagement of resources.⁽⁷⁾ The mist of pessimism about Afghanistan's future has not lifted as yet. In fact the frequency of comments about its lapsing back into anarchy, disorder or civil war has increased during the past year.⁽⁸⁾ There are old and new challenges that Afghanistan and the international community are genuinely interested in its rehabilitation face. These are: ethnic fragmentation, Taliban insurgency, drug economy and warlordism. All of them undermine the reconstruction of the Afghan state, and would stand to benefit from its weakness or total destruction. And in our view, there is no other option to building a unified, stable and peaceful Afghanistan.

b) A neutral state

Afghanistan's present and future stability is no less a function of its 'frontier' character and the regional environment than the internal consensus or confrontation among its social groups. Its ethnic groups straddle across the boundaries into other states where they form the majorities. Afghanistan contains remnant ethnic parts with the exception of a large Pushtun population. It is larger than other social groups but its greater numbers live in Pakistan. This provokes fears, concerns and legitimate interest in the future of the country and its politics and its security and foreign policy orientation. Just to emphasise this point, historically, Afghanistan has been a buffer among contesting empires, and a venue of separation and accommodation. Its post-colonial national assertion changed its self-definition without changing much of the regional realities that its neighbouring countries have inherited. One of the dangerous outcomes of national self-assertion was that it imprudently allowed the

Soviet Union to penetrate its state institutions, in expectation that aligning with a superpower would provide it the means to develop as well as reassert its irredentist claims against Pakistan. Afghanistan's territorial ambitions were not in sync with its historical and regional realities. Its gradual transformation from a buffer state into a strategic base of a superpower has brought about tragic results. We know the history of the Soviet-Afghan war and its tragic consequences for the state and society in Afghanistan.

We also know the post-Soviet civil war and the mini 'Great Game' among the regional states and how they used different ethnic groups to advance their interests in the country. Afghanistan's warring factions provided the base for regional rivals to play out their political and strategic game. The Afghans would rephrase this but that depends on which Afghan groups we are talking about.

Afghanistan today is in its new historical phase in which it has to reassess itself as to what kind of state it is going to be. Its success would depend on its self-perceptions, its vision about its future and ties with the regional states.

c) A nominal or failed state

There are already bleak scenarios about the future of Afghanistan which are widely circulating in the region as well as among experts in the policymaking think tanks. There is an emerging belief that things in Afghanistan after seven years of international security and economic assistance are not on the right track. Some analysts question the over-emphasis on combat operations that have taken attention and resources away from providing human security.⁽⁹⁾ This comment is not without merit, but then again, no one can hope to accomplish a great deal by devoting resources to an insurgency-stricken province or region. The real question is what ought to come first, or should both security and development be two concurrent streams in pacifying the country? There are no easy answers to the dilemmas international coalition forces face in Afghanistan, particularly in the southern and eastern parts of the country

where the Taliban insurgency has been on the rise. They have tried to meet this challenge by putting together Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which at best, have a mixed record.

The coalition forces differ greatly on the question of reconstruction priorities, use of force, commitment of troops, command structures and other vital issues that would have a strong bearing on the outcome of the reconstruction process. The United States would like the European Union countries to provide more troops and participate more in policing, drug interdiction, poppy-eradication, and combat operations than its member states are apparently willing to offer.

The real challenge is the growing power of the Taliban to destabilize the country. During the past two years, they have emerged as a credible force with greater capacity to trouble the Afghan national army and foreign troops.⁽¹⁰⁾ One of the most important reasons of the Taliban resurgence is that reforms, reconstruction, development and security have not “gained traction” across the whole country, particularly among the Pushtun-dominated regions.⁽¹¹⁾ And these are the areas where the Taliban insurgency has been on the rise.

The failure of the Afghan state and the international coalition forces in expanding the writ of the state has resulted in revival of the drug economy, which is estimated to be contributing around 50 per cent of the gross domestic product of the country. Its volume in monetary terms is more than US\$ 3 billion, a colossal amount that sustains warlords and partly the Taliban insurgency. Afghanistan now produces around 92 per cent of the world’s opium. Afghanistan has lapsed back into a *criminal economy*, a term that Afghan opium producers would reject, under the scrutiny of the international coalition forces. It is not that they willingly allowed this retransformation to happen, but rather they have no power, will and social capacity to address this issue.⁽¹²⁾ The Taliban on the other hand have used opium trade and protection of poppy fields as a source

of building their political roots back in the Pushtun community. Much time it seems has been lost in winning over the Pushtun tribes through soft policies. On the contrary, far from pacifying the Pushtun countryside, the hard-hitting counter-insurgency blows have caused a great deal of collateral damage. Additionally, human rights abuses and little output of the reconstruction efforts reaching the population have pushed them closer to the Taliban.

Afghanistan after seven years of international assistance, waves of counter-insurgency campaigns and political support is still in the red zone. The new Afghan state has not taken off and remains symbolic, nominal and deprived of social energies, broad-based legitimacy and continues to be weak in functional capacity.

Conclusion

Every neighbour of Afghanistan facing a spectre of wider instability and western countries that are concerned over the “bloody borders” of Islam, have a great stake in the reconstruction of Afghanistan as a stable, peaceful, unified nation state. Considering the history, terrain, legacy and the nature of the task, Afghanistan poses one of the greatest challenges in post-conflict reconstruction. Failure of nation- and state-building in Afghanistan will imply disaster for the entire international community. This is one of those collaborative international efforts whose success will make every country a victor, and its failure will make each one a loser.

Afghanistan can be transformed from a centre-point of regional conflict to a nexus of regional cooperation. However, this would require some cold-blooded analysis and evaluation of what has gone wrong, what policy instruments are needed to accomplish course-correction and, more importantly, how international interest and support can be sustained over a long period of time. The Afghan leaders and the neighbouring states will have to show greater wisdom,

assume more responsibility and resolve imagined and real problems before a frustrated world community turns its back on the country. If that happens before Afghanistan can stand on its own feet, the country's future will hang between a failed and a nominal state. That is not going to be appealing for anyone, particularly in the region because that may spark militancy, multiple insurgencies, making the country once again a hub of confrontation. That will make the future of Afghanistan and the region gloomier than we have so far seen or can imagine.

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Neutralizing Extremism and Insurgency in Afghanistan and Its Borderlands

*Cooperative Strategies of National Development,
Pacification, and Integration as Prerequisites for
the Future Peace and Stability of Southern Asia*

Dr Rodney W. Jones

Introduction

Our conference's central theme of "Unabated Turmoil in Afghanistan" as a threat to the stability of South Asia implicitly reflects the setbacks international and regional efforts have suffered since the 9/11 al-Qaeda attacks on the United States in achieving their anti-terrorist aims efficiently, or anything close to conclusively — even after an expensive military and political campaign of nearly seven years. Those aims at a minimum were to eliminate the Taliban as a political force, destroy al-Qaeda and its capacity to organize long-distance terrorist attacks, neutralize its local affiliates, and begin rehabilitating Afghanistan with genuinely-elected, representative government, physical and economic reconstruction, and the capacity to maintain

internal stability and peace with its neighbours. Progress was made in both Afghanistan and Pakistan between 2001 and early 2007, but the campaign has faced growing setbacks recently and clearly the earlier progress made is potentially reversible.

To be fair in evaluating the length of this campaign and its so far inconclusive results, President George Bush's original 2001 declaration of a "global war on terrorism" warned that it would not be over quickly but rather would last many years. Few of his close advisors seemed to believe, however, that it would take this long or be this hard, or grasped how gravely the internal pushback against the March 2003 occupation of Iraq would compromise the original gains against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. This should not obscure the fact that the US-led Coalition's early operations in Afghanistan were reasonably well conceived and executed to drive the Taliban regime out of power in Kabul. Also, unlike those in Iraq, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) enjoyed the benefit of broad international support and, except for the core backers of the Taliban, broad support within the diverse peoples of Afghanistan.

The setbacks to US and NATO objectives that have materialized in Afghanistan and Pakistan between 2005 and early 2008 are clearly serious. Though not seen in Western capitals as insurmountable, they have stimulated an evolutionary overhaul of the Coalition's regional strategy and operations to reinvigorate the rebuilding and training of Afghan military and police forces, marginally strengthen NATO multinational force deployments and add US reinforcements, with some other operational adjustments to beef up development activities through provincial and district reconstruction teams.⁽¹⁾

The basic elements of the "unabated turmoil" in Afghanistan are clear. After dispersing into the mountainous and desert areas overlapping Pakistan in December 2001, the Taliban gradually regrouped, adapted their tactics, generated new resources, and mounted a resurgence that has gathered

strength incrementally since 2004, aiming to wear down international and reemerging Afghan security forces, overthrow the Karzai regime, and impose a *salafi* (medieval) vision of Islamic rule. The Afghan Taliban successfully cultivated support and sanctuaries among their kinsmen in the Pakistani tribal belt and maintained collaborative ties with Islamist activist political parties and adjunct extremist organizations in Pakistan. Their networks help provide shelter and concealment for al-Qaeda (the Arabs), other ‘foreign’ extremist groups,⁽²⁾ and the reclusive Mullah Omar, *emir* of the Afghan Taliban, in remote wilderness areas in the Pashtun and Baluchi borderlands between Afghanistan and Pakistan. This lately has enabled the survivors of al-Qaeda’s hierarchy (who undoubtedly provided strategic guidance and encouragement to the Taliban resurgence) to replenish losses, disseminate recorded messages abroad and sustain symbiotic ties with extremist affiliates inside both countries as well as elsewhere in the Gulf and Middle East. These problems have persisted despite genuine efforts by the Musharraf government of Pakistan since it severed ties with the Taliban in September 2001 to curtail them inside Pakistan itself.

This paper is an effort to identify the crucial elements that have given the Taliban resurgence its staying power internally as well as within the borderland region, and the implications for both Afghanistan and Pakistan if it is not reversed, neutralized or pacified. It characterizes the nature of the challenges posed by this Taliban resurgence to the US-led, international effort to rebuild Afghanistan, help root out armed extremism in the connecting borderlands of both countries, and eliminate al-Qaeda and its ability to shelter in and use this region as a base of its terrorist operations. The paper also seeks to outline a cooperative strategy for long-term success that combines necessary military counter-insurgency capabilities with broader policies of political initiative, economic development, pacification, and integration in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderland – with the

main focus on what needs to be done by the United States with Pakistan, and by Pakistan, as a partner, assuming such a partnership remains viable within Pakistan.

The underlying thesis is that Pakistan has a unique and historic opportunity today to strengthen its national integrity by developing and integrating the Pashtun tribal areas on its side of the border as a regular part of the “state” of Pakistan. By so doing, it could contribute immensely to the stabilization of Afghanistan and lay the foundation for mutually beneficial relations with Afghanistan and most, if not all, of Afghanistan’s neighbours. Given recent developments, some will doubt that Pakistan has the political capacity to pursue such a course energetically and systematically by its own means. Most would agree that it will require substantial outside support. Recent developments also raise serious doubt about whether Pakistan’s current elected leadership will have the commitment and can generate the political will to take that path, even with sustained assistance from the United States. Nevertheless, the opportunity presents itself, needs to be better understood, and may be compromised by failure to act on a clear vision of Pakistan’s long term national interests.

Political Change in Pakistan: About-face on terrorism?

To the surprise of many in Washington, the new coalition government formed in Islamabad in March after the February 18, 2008 national elections in Pakistan⁽³⁾ began a policy of negotiation with its Pakistan-based Taliban groups in the Pashtun tribal belt and other Islamic extremist organizations in the Northwest, robbing momentum from the Army operations. The policy of negotiation sought a truce with such tribal Taliban leaders as Baitullah Mehsud, whose Mehsud clan is based in South Waziristan agency. Baitullah is one of several local Taliban chiefs who have organized the flow of fighters from Pakistan to support Taliban activities in

Afghanistan's Pashtun-majority provinces and began recently to operate under the banner of the *Tehrik-i-Taliban-i-Pakistan* (the Pakistani Taliban Movement, a confederation of Taliban groups). He himself is believed by authorities to be complicit in organizing the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2008.⁽⁴⁾ The same policy was manifested in releasing extremist leaders such as Maulvi Sufi Muhammad, founder of the *Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Mohammadi* (TNSM, or Movement for the Enforcement of Shari'a Law).⁽⁵⁾ The Musharraf government banned the TNSM and imprisoned Sufi Mohammad in January 2002 for organizing armed cross-border attacks from the NWFP against US forces in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001. The TNSM went underground and resurfaced under the leadership of Sufi's son-in-law, Maulana Fazlullah, who recently launched an insurrection in the name of Islam that continues in the alpine district of Swat, north of Peshawar.⁽⁶⁾ In effect, this new policy of accommodation of the Taliban and allied extremists – what many observers fear will boomerang as a naïve experiment with “appeasement” — appears to reverse the policies of the Musharraf government which had given genuine, if not wholly effective, support since October 2001 to the US-led “war on terrorism” inside Afghanistan. Musharraf's government had made methodical attempts to control Pakistan's borders, curtail Afghan Taliban exploitation of safe havens inside Pakistan, prevent movement by Pakistani sympathizers of fighters, arms, and other resources into Afghanistan. It did detect, arrest, and hand over to US agencies several dozen al-Qaeda leaders and operatives active inside Pakistan between 2002 and 2007.

If these policies of the newly elected government of Pakistan indeed prove to be a reversal of Pakistan's 2001 commitments to sever ties with the Taliban and eliminate organized terrorism by religious extremists, they will represent a grave challenge to US and NATO partner security interests and could quickly undermine the structure of US-Pakistani security and economic cooperation that has

been expanded since 2001. Taken at face value, these policies imply that Pakistan has reached a political crossroads in its strategic calculations on how to deal with domestically rooted extremists, its Western partners, and some of its neighbours. The accommodationist policies suggest that the newly elected Pakistani leaders believe their political survival depends on making deals with the Taliban groups, hoping to turn them away from instigating violence within Pakistan. If reducing internal violence proves to be in exchange for turning a blind eye to Pakistani Taliban attacks on the Karzai government (and US and NATO forces) in Afghanistan, it could do irreparable damage to the US-Pakistan security relationship. Perhaps, with a presidential election campaign underway in the United States, the newly elected Pakistani leadership is altering Pakistan's posture on the war on terrorism to generate bargaining chips with those who take charge of a changed administration in Washington in January 2009. But this could be a serious miscalculation.

In an effort to allay concerns in Washington about this shift in Pakistani policies, Yousuf Raza Gilani, Pakistan's new Prime Minister, published an op ed article in the Washington Post on April 30, 2008, entitled "Pakistan's Moment: We Will Fight Terrorism – Our Way."⁽⁷⁾ In essence, his brief was that the new government will fight terrorism with a multi-pronged approach and under a democratic umbrella, using force only as a last resort. He described his new government as "a coalition of modern, innovative, progressive democratic forces" that will "reform our tribal [insurgency] areas economically, politically, and socially through measures that address the needs of the people and will integrate these areas into mainstream society." Indeed, this general formula is sound. Yet Gilani omitted any reference to the fact that essentially the same formula for the development of the tribal areas (to complement Pakistan's military security and enforcement efforts with a multi-pronged and politically viable strategy) had been the subject of the previous Musharraf government's

dialogue with the Bush administration for the best part of two years – and had even begun to get legs by mid-2007 through initial Congressional authorization of US assistance and Pakistani commitments to generate counterpart funding. Gilani’s signal that Pakistan intends to maintain policy continuity and cooperation with the United States on the problem of Taliban insurgency in the tribal areas is, on its face, encouraging.

Gilani’s article went on to say, *inter alia* (italics added):

“The world is rightly concerned about the threat of terrorism and expects its elimination to be our government’s highest priority. We intend to vigorously continue the war against terrorism *with the support of the people*. Pakistan must fight terrorism for Pakistan’s sake. *Past efforts have suffered because of the view [inside Pakistan] that Pakistan sought to combat terrorism only in response to international pressure.*

“Our strategy against global terrorism will be multifaceted. We will combine the use of force against terrorists and civil dialogue with those who, because of religious or ethnic considerations, were misled into supporting extremists. ... Pakistan will not negotiate with terrorists, but it will not refrain from talking to insurgent tribesmen whose withdrawal of support could help drain the swamp in which terrorists fester and grow. Yet no talks will be held with anyone refusing to lay down arms. ...

“Erroneous comparisons have been made between our new policy and the failed deals reached [by the Musharraf government] with tribal militants along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in 2004 and 2006. Those agreements

were signed after militant groups bruised Pakistan's security forces in battle. *Now we are negotiating from a position of strength.* Militants have been asked to surrender their weapons and unequivocally give up violence. *We will not cut off our ability to use force* or lower the vigilance we maintain to guard against violations of the peace agreements. ...

“We understand that unemployment, inflation and poverty are corrosive elements that, if left unaddressed can create hopelessness and ennui that undermine authority. Our government confronts high global food and oil prices and has inherited food shortages exacerbated by the smuggling of Pakistani wheat across our borders. Yet our government plans to be the safety net that ensures equity and protects people. *We seek and expect the support of the international community in attaining these objectives.*

“There are moments in all nations' histories that divide the past from the future, that define nations' souls. This is such a moment for Pakistan. *God willing, we will demonstrate to our people and the other 1.3 billion Muslims on this planet that democracy works and is the best guarantee against terrorism, injustice, and hopelessness.*”

These are brave words. Aside from the rhetoric, as a public statement of official intent, most of them are appealing. As a reflection of the desire to mobilize broad popular support for difficult tasks, they are unarguable. That winning such support is best done through a democratic process is, in principle, unassailable. The question is whether what these words mean to the new government in Islamabad is congruent, operationally, with American anti-terrorist

interests, whether the new government has the capacity to deliver on them, and whether it will energetically pursue this course. Clearly, it will be some time before we have tangible answers to these questions.

The Taliban insurgency and the Pashtun

The revived Taliban insurgency is a basic threat to the future viability of a modernizing Afghanistan and a lesser but still serious threat to domestic political stability and a traditionally moderate consensus on the proper status of Islam in society and politics in Pakistan itself.⁽⁸⁾ It is also a potentially disruptive factor in the relationship between both countries, across a border that Afghanistan has not officially recognized and that is disregarded routinely as an inter-state boundary by itinerant rural Pashtun groups on both sides – making for a notoriously porous border. As a political matter, the heart of the problem is twofold: the division of the Pashtun homeland between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the Islamic radicalization of segments of the Pashtun tribes in the borderland fuelling insurgency in both countries.

The Taliban movement is a militant outgrowth of radicalized strands of the Pashtun peoples, who collectively form a distinct ethno-linguistic group long dominant in the monarchy that ruled traditional Afghan society until it was overthrown in a coup in 1973. The Taliban arose spontaneously among activist Islamist Pashtuns inside southern Afghanistan as recently as 1992 but was soon supported by Pakistan as an ‘organized’ movement, drawing in part on Afghan refugees sheltered in camps in Pakistan.⁽⁹⁾ Pakistani leaders believed the Taliban could become an antidote to the unremitting civil warfare inside Afghanistan after the exit of Soviet occupation forces in 1989 and also provide Pakistan influence over its neighbour. Pakistan’s gamble on the Taliban was that it would restore order inside Afghanistan, and win broad support among the Afghan Pashtun populace, which for a time it did, albeit through

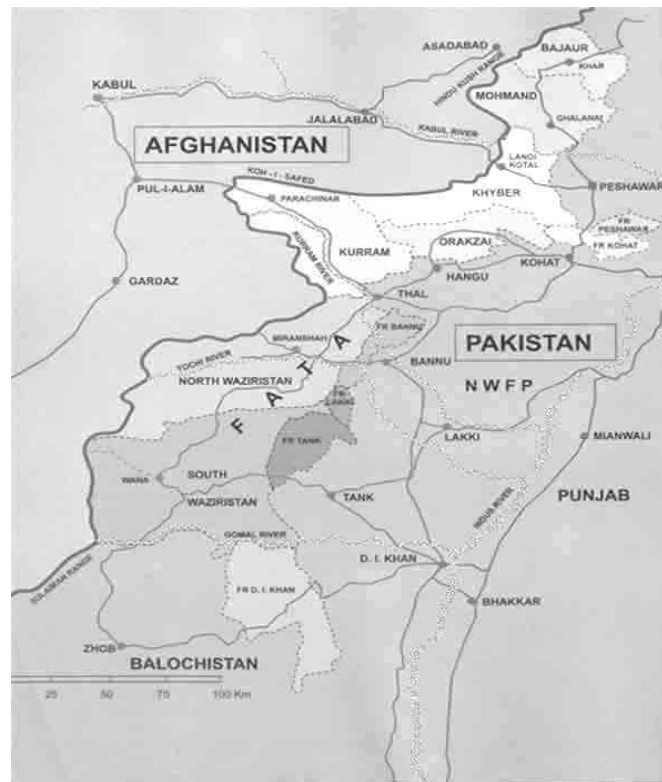
harsh intimidation. Pakistan's gamble backfired when the Taliban imposed a primitively rigid Islamic regime on Afghanistan and gave al-Qaeda a haven from which it organized long-distance attacks on the West and provoked the October 2001 launch of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan. OEF quickly toppled the Taliban regime in the winter of 2001 and, with sponsorship in the West, set the stage for an interim government under Hamid Karzai in Kabul in 2002, with regular parliamentary and presidential elections taking place subsequently. The Taliban seemed for a time to have melted away, but began reconstituting itself and had renewed an insurgency in Afghanistan, still then on a small scale, by the end 2003.

While the Pashtun peoples are divided among many tribes and lineages, the traditional culture they share is fiercely resistant to outside domination, particularly where it takes its purest form in the tribal areas.⁽¹⁰⁾ As an ethno-linguistic group, however, the Pashtun overlap both Afghanistan and Pakistan, and ethnic Pashtuns are, in fact, more numerous in Pakistan than Afghanistan. Their diaspora had stretched deeply into Mughal and colonial India. Probably originating in eastern Iran many centuries back, the Pashtun have been the largest ethnic group and dominant political players in multi-ethnic Afghanistan since 1747 when Durrani Pashtun leaders formed a Pashtun tribal confederacy to create the Afghan kingdom, wresting the country as an entity away from former Persian and Indian imperial suzerainty.⁽¹¹⁾

British expansion of colonial rule in India subsequently led to wars with the Afghans and finally to the British-imposed border demarcation known as the Durand Line in 1893, which entailed Afghanistan's de facto cession of an eastern portion of the Pashtun homeland to British India. This ceded territory in turn became part of independent Pakistan in 1947, forming the Pashtun-majority North West Frontier Province (NWFP) west of the Indus River and centred on Peshawar, along with a series of semi-

autonomous Pashtun “tribal agencies” in the mountainous terrain south of Peshawar collectively known as FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Agencies),⁽¹²⁾ and also Pashtun-majority districts further south in Baluchistan province. (See map, following page.) The British colonial regime gave up initial attempts to integrate the most warlike Pashtun tribes in and around FATA under the regular provincial and district administration of NWFP and acquiesced in their autonomy within “tribal agencies” in return for peace, a pattern Pakistan inherited and essentially continued.

Pakistan’s Pashtun belt further extends into Baluchistan province, to Quetta, in the southwest, in districts where the writ of the colonial government was eventually extended. The Pashtun belt from north to south constitutes the lion’s share of the Afghan-Pakistan borderland, the rest — the southern stretch to the Arabian Sea and border with Iran — being populated primarily by Baluchi tribes.



Map of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the Pak-Afghan Borderland

The Taliban insurgency in Pakistan today is centred in the Pashtun tribal areas and adjoining districts of the NWFP. It increasingly reinforces and supports the Afghan Taliban insurgency within the neighbouring Pashtun interior of Afghanistan — mainly in Afghanistan's eastern and southern provinces facing Pakistan. The resilience of the Taliban insurgency against central power in Pakistan has much to do with the fact that it is fuelled and supported by several Islamist political parties and allied extremist organizations based in Pakistan's urban interior.⁽¹³⁾ The cities concerned include Peshawar and Quetta near the border, but also cities in the heavily populated provinces of Punjab and Sindh. Activist Islamist political party constituencies exist in

mosques and madrassas in Karachi, Lahore, Multan, Bahawalpur, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi and even Islamabad, as well as in many smaller cities and towns.⁽¹⁴⁾ Insofar as there is a real long-range threat of “Talibanization” of Pakistan, it is arguably less from the radicalized elements of Pashtun tribes in the borderland than from the Islamist revolutionary activism in these urban constituencies that stays under the radar. Even so, it should be noted that the electoral appeal of these urban centers of Islamist activism, while often highly influential in their immediate surroundings, has been limited to about 10 per cent of the nationwide electorate of Pakistan.

To put the tribal Pashtun sources of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan into larger perspective for non-specialists, it is useful to look at the relative size of the Pashtun peoples in both countries and draw a number of other politically relevant social distinctions (see data on Pashto-speakers in Table 1, “Pashtun Populations in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” below). Leaving aside the historical Pashtun diaspora assimilated in India and Pashtun emigration since World War II to the Middle East and the West, the main Pashtun population in South Asia today is resident in Afghanistan and Pakistan, with a total number of approximately 40 million.

Interestingly, while the Pashtun are associated historically with the power structure of Afghanistan, Pakistan today contains nearly twice the number of Pashtuns as does Afghanistan — about 26 million in Pakistan versus about 13.8 million in Afghanistan. This does not count the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, of whom over 80 per cent have been Pashtun, and whose numbers have declined from a peak of over 5 million to well under 3 million through repatriation and assimilation. While the population statistics for Afghanistan are rather unreliable (no census having been conducted for over 30 years), the Pashtuns probably represent about 42 per cent of Afghanistan’s population today, a plurality, but not an absolute majority. Each of the other large ethno-linguistic groups in Afghanistan (e.g.,

Farsi- and Dari-speakers in Herat and Hazara, and the Tadjiks and Uzbeks in northern Afghanistan) are smaller in number, giving the edge to Pashtuns in representative government formation and making the choice of Hamid Karzai, a Durrani Pashtun, entirely natural as President over the post-2002 coalition governments in Afghanistan.

Table 1

Pashtun Populations in Afghanistan and Pakistan			
	Total Population	Pashto Speakers in Millions	Pashto Speakers %
Afghanistan	32,738,376	13,750,000	42.0
Pakistan	167,762,040	25,868,900	15.4
NWFP	32,179,556	16,390,690	73.9
Tribal Areas (FATA)	4,026,30	3,989,765	99.1
Punjab	93,314,985	1,119,800	1.2
Baluchistan	8,322,260	2,463,880	29.6
Sindh	38,582,560	1,620,470	4.2
Afghan Refugees – 2005	3,000,000	2,460,000	82.0

Sources: CIA, *The World Factbook*, “Afghanistan,” and “Pakistan”, *Pakistan Statistical Yearbook*, 2007; Pakistan Government Division of Statistics, “Population by Mother Tongue,” access at: http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/other_tables/pop_by_mother_tongue.pdf.

In Afghanistan, the narrow Pashtun elite consists of the descendants of leading families and landlords, as well as educated professionals, bureaucrats, senior military officials, and white collar workers in Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif and Jalalabad that had been associated with the monarchy or subsequent regimes. This elite is urbanized and recent generations of the leading families often are well educated in a modern style. While conscious of their tribal origins and shared cultural traditions (dietary inclinations, intra-lineage marriage patterns) and their residual identification with one or another of the larger tribes, members of this elite tend to

be detached from the rural tribal settlements, structures and specific tribal codes of behavior. This elite generally practices Islam (is 'observant'), but is less devoted to ritual and Shari'a strictures, less reverent of clerics, and much less susceptible to radical Islamist appeals. Within the cities, a commercial class drawing on Pashtun as well as other ethnic groups exists — shop-owners, small merchants, brokers, and 'smugglers' — along with a working class of migrants to the city from rural areas. These heterogeneous urban groups as a whole typically do not get swept up in radical religious appeals, although some fraction may do so episodically. Groups in the working class, however, often maintain rural ties, remain aware of their tribal origins and adhere to a conservative Islam.

As one moves away from the cities into remote rural areas and particularly into mountain hamlets, the hold of the Pashtun tribal society, locally organized, becomes pervasive, and the reach of formal government may simply not exist. A rough estimate would be that 70 per cent of Afghanistan's Pashtuns (about 10 million) reside in agricultural settings in villages in the rural areas and are embedded in the traditional Pashtun culture in some day to day fashion, but probably less than a third of that segment (3 to 4 million) resides in remote, mountainous settlements, without paved roads, in near isolation from the urban areas, and adheres to the Pashtun tribal culture in its purest traditional forms.

Most Pashtun males have access to firearms, even in the cities, but in the remote areas, they may carry them in the open routinely. The Pashtun tribal tradition is fractious and feud-ridden, and intermittently warlike. A multitude of rivalries usually divides clans and tribes and elicits shifting alliances. Uniting the tribal peoples for common action takes prodigious effort, except when there is a visible, common, "foreign" enemy — as was the case against the forays of the Sikhs or the British in earlier eras or against the Soviet forces during the occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Traditional Islam in rural Pashtun society, including the

remote tribal areas is conservative, not radical, usually observed in households and in small mosques, with prayer leaders who typically have only the most rudimentary education.

But radical Islam brought by itinerant preachers schooled in urban seminaries can rally a “call to arms” in the defense of Islam.⁽¹⁵⁾ It can and has been used to mobilize male recruits across tribal and clan lines both in the settled agricultural areas and more remote Pashtun tribal areas, as well as among mostly Pashtun refugees driven out of those areas into Pakistan. Just such a recruiting mechanism was organized on a large scale against the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan among the Pashtuns in the 1980s — with covert Saudi and US funding and other support — but implemented by the Pakistani military and intelligence services, often working through Afghan and Pakistani Islamist organizations and their seminaries, usually near Peshawar or Quetta. The Islamist organizations provided the radical preachers and not a few of the militant commanders of the *mujahiddin* (Muslim ‘holy warriors’) to organize and lead a guerilla campaign against Soviets. After the Soviet forces finally left in 1989 and the successor Afghan governing system was wracked with civil war, the same methods were employed (though without US support this time) to build up the nascent, Pashtun-based Taliban organization in the early 1990s as a means of overcoming the Afghan civil war and imposing order on the country.⁽¹⁶⁾ Thus the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan today is largely a legacy, notwithstanding certain colonial era precedents, of the anti-Soviet mobilization of *mujahiddin* and the subsequent Taliban campaign drawing primarily from the Pashtun tribal belts on both sides of the border.

Inside Pakistan – where the impact of economic and political modernization is generally much further along than in Afghanistan — Pashtun society in the northwest is more clearly differentiated by habitat and political context. Of the 16 million Pashtuns who currently inhabit the NWFP (see

Table 1), one of Pakistan's regular provinces, most live in what are known as the *settled areas*, which are relatively prosperous, often irrigated, agricultural tracts at lower elevation, and with an admixture of small-scale industry; or as urbanized inhabitants of Peshawar, the provincial capital, and several smaller cities and towns in the region. The Pashtuns of the settled areas are under the authority of the province and the national government, and are generally well integrated today in the national and provincial electoral and judicial systems.

A much smaller number of Pashtuns, roughly 4 million today, reside in the 'autonomous' *tribal areas* of FATA, mostly scattered in villages or homesteads in the mountain valleys of the borderland, with some also in the agency town seats and a number of other towns. These Pashtuns are deeply embedded in the traditional tribal culture, forming a mirror image, culturally speaking, of their tribal kinsmen across the Durand Line in the mountains of Afghanistan. In the rural and remoter parts of these areas, males generally have moved about individually armed, either with rifles or automatic weapons. In tribal disputes, the leaders of tribes or clans spontaneously form *lashkars* (bands of fighters) to enforce their claims, and by tradition expect no interference from the Pakistani or provincial authorities or Pakistan's regular armed forces.

In FATA, under the loose supervision of agency administrators delegated by the government, the tribal Pashtuns have largely run their own affairs through the patriarchal authority of tribal chiefs (*maliks*) or through inter-tribal councils of chiefs and elders (*jirgas*) by applying the culture, norms and principles of *Pashtunwali* (the Pashtun way of life).⁽¹⁷⁾ Decision-making in inter-tribal councils and within tribes among elders has tended to be consensual (likened by some to a rudimentary form of democracy), but when disputes are not resolved peacefully, they usually lead to armed quarrels and conflicts, and cycles of revenge. Transcending tribal divisions, the Pashtun tribal

system is influenced politically by Muslim clerics (*maulvis*, preachers in mosques) and Muslim scholars and teachers (individual *a'alim*, plural *ulema*) based in Islamic seminaries and schools (the *madrassa*, or, in plural, *madaris*). Pashtuns in the FATA tribal agencies and in a few smaller tribal areas adjoining the NWFP – the latter designated Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) — essentially fall outside the regular electoral, administrative and judicial systems of the national and provincial governments, vested in a form of political autonomy conceded by the British and largely continued by independent Pakistan.

In Quetta city itself and north of Quetta in several districts of Baluchistan province live some 2.6 million members of Pashtun tribes in semi-mountainous villages and hamlets, much of it somewhat arid land adjacent to the border with Afghanistan, or reside in the city of Quetta or its outskirts.⁽¹⁸⁾ The Pashtuns in Baluchistan are formally subject to the provincial administrative and electoral system, but the reach of the formal authorities over the rural tribes can be tenuous.

Pashtuns have also migrated over time – some in the more distant past, some as a concomitant of urban and economic development, and some from the refugee influx triggered by the Soviet occupation from 1980 to 1989 into Pakistan's border areas, and now number over a million in cities and towns of Punjab and the capital district of Islamabad, and about 1.6 million in Sindh province – the latter mainly on the outskirts of the metropolitan city of Karachi, in Pashtun settlements. All these, like the inhabitants of NWFP and Baluchistan are under the writ of the government, provincial or local police authorities, and the judicial system, and participate in elections, typically forming one or more ethnic voting blocs.

Outside the tribal areas, Pashtuns generally are well-integrated in Pakistan's national economy. In the NWFP, many are prosperous farmers and entrepreneurs in textile and food-processing industries. Others populate the

administrative, police and public educational services of the province, and the ranks of the paramilitary Frontier Corps which operates in the border areas. In Baluchistan, though the economy is less affluent and diversified, the pattern of settled areas is similar to NWFP. Where Pashtuns have migrated elsewhere into Pakistan's interior, one will always find a few who are wealthy merchants and more who are petty traders and shopkeepers, educators and other professionals and white collar workers, and yet a larger number in blue collar trades – from construction to dock workers. Pashtun blue collar workers, even some from the tribal areas, have migrated to serve as labourers in the oil-producing centers of the Gulf. Pashtuns are particularly prominent in road transportation networks, some with bus, truck and taxi companies, employing kinsmen as bus and truck drivers and taxicab drivers. Pashtuns from the “settled areas” have also been recruited in substantial numbers into the Pakistan Army, including the senior officer corps – a matter of some importance when we come back to the topics of Pashtun rebellion and the pursuit of counter-insurgency.

Pashtuns who are urbanized or who have been absorbed into the provincial and national economies, or into the Army for two or more generations — particularly in the settled areas – are at least partially detached from their former tribal culture. They retain an affinity or identification with their tribal origins, often preserve the mother tongue at home, and may look to close kinsmen at some distance to find women for marriages to their sons, but they are generally bi-lingual (or multi-lingual) and their personal behaviour is no longer embedded deeply in traditional strictures. This national assimilation is even more thorough for Pashtuns who have migrated and settled in the non-Pashtun provinces more than a generation ago. Pashtun ethnic and linguistic identification and links with kinsmen who may be more traditional do not disappear entirely, of course, and these links are important in deciphering the political dynamics, and Pashtun sympathies, on the questions

of insurgency, and on the ability of insurgents to gather their own intelligence and obtain resources from far-flung parts of Pakistan.

Pakistan did inherit a secessionist problem with the Pashtuns inhabitants of the NWFP when the country gained independence in 1947. The most powerful political force in the NWFP before and after partition was Sardar Abdul Ghaffar Khan's *Khudai Khidmatgar* (Servants of God) party, also known as the "Red Shirts" for their socialist leanings. This Pashtun organization had agitated in the 1930s and 1940s for Indian independence against British rule, allied with the Indian National Congress. Initially the *Khudai Khidmatgar* opposed the partition of India and creation of Pakistan. After Pakistan was formed, the organization reconciled itself to the existence of the new country. It also renamed itself the National Awami Party (NAP), and Ghaffar Khan's son, Abdul Wali Khan, took over the leadership. In the 1950s and 1960s, the NAP opposed General Ayub Khan's initiative to unite then West Pakistan into a single province, seeking to preserve the NWFP as a Pashtun bailiwick, and became the standard bearer for a vague Pashtun nationalism. It advocated that an entity called *Pakhtunistan* (or Land of the Pakhtuns) be carved out of Pakistan, a concept that got symbolic but not energetic support from the Pashtun elite in the government of Afghanistan.

But by the 1970s, the "secessionist" flavour of this Pashtun political party based largely in NWFP and northern Baluchistan had dissipated. The restoration of the provincial governments in the west, including in NWFP, after the loss of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1971, together with the natural political and economic integration of Pakistan by then, robbed Pashtun separatism of its urgency. The successor political party, the Awami National Party (ANP) of today, retains the Pashtun outlook and secular objectives of its antecedents but aims now only for the renaming of the NWFP as *Pakhtunkhwa*, meaning Pakhtun (or Pashtun)

realm, reflecting its ethnic, cultural and linguistic character, just as the names of Pakistan's three other main provinces, Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan reflect theirs.

That said, there is a residual fear in Pakistan that the demand for Pashtun separatism could be revived if the Pashtun peoples – especially, but not only those in the tribal areas – are inflamed by any long-term military action against them and the areas in which they reside. The Pakistani establishment fears secessionist impulses could be stimulated not only by US Coalition attacks on Pashtun areas but more immediately by the Pakistan Army's participation in the US-led "war on terrorism" in the Pashtun borderland – focused on terrorists though it may be. There is a widespread Pakistani understanding, as well, that such a Pashtun inflammation – if protracted or enlarged – also stands in the way of the international stabilization of Afghanistan. There is a related fear of larger national security significance to which the Pakistan military establishment is particularly sensitive — that any prolonged high- or low-intensity warfare in Pakistan's Pashtun borderland with Afghanistan to the west also weakens Pakistan's defenses against India, viewed as Pakistan's primary adversary, in the east.

Our geo-demographic discussion of the Pashtun areas adds context and thus helps explain the following points:

- The Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan and the Taliban insurgency in Pakistan today are symbiotic, two sides of the same coin. Both arise from radicalized strands of the Pashtun peoples in tribal areas that overlap both countries, shaped and supported by urban Islamist networks. The active insurgents are a small fraction of the Pashtun peoples overall, but they combine an intense motivation to establish both ethnic Pashtun political power and hard-line Islamic government. They view the US-led "war on terrorism" operations that unseated the former Afghan Taliban regime as a foreign intrusion and an attack on Islam that must be repelled. They exploit the

effects of foreign-led combat operations in Afghanistan, especially collateral damage and deaths of civilians, as opportunities to weld Pashtun tribal, ethnic, and radical religious interests together in their struggle for power. The bulk of the surrounding Pashtun population is not specifically Taliban in identification nor organized in Taliban operations but even when not intimidated by the Taliban, often sympathizes with their resistance to foreign intruders and is naturally angered by collateral damage. That anger ultimately yields recruits and, together with aggressive Taliban intimidation techniques, eliminates informants and curtails human intelligence collection, even by locals.

- Support of the Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan by Pakistani Pashtuns makes the insurgency there inherently difficult to suppress effectively by military enforcement and socio-economic development measures inside Afghanistan alone. For US and NATO forces on the ground in Afghanistan, the adversary infiltrates villages and wages classic guerilla warfare without front lines or uniforms. It generally presents no high-value targets whose elimination might turn the tide of warfare.
- Taliban and other extremist groups take advantage of shelter and safe havens in the overlapping and mountainous, tribal Pashtun areas between the two countries. The neo-Taliban movement within Pakistan shelters, by default and deliberately, a core of top al-Qaeda leaders and protects other foreign-origin Islamist extremist groups. Since Pakistan prohibits Western troops operating on the ground in Pakistan, the involvement of Pakistani Pashtuns and of Pakistani territory in sheltering al-Qaeda — however unintended or undesired officially — is nevertheless a fact. It weakens confidence in the US-Pakistan partnership, probably on both sides, although for somewhat different reasons.

- Pakistan's Pashtun insurgency was circumscribed geographically, at least through mid-2007, to the Pashtun tribal belt of the Afghan-Pakistan borderland, but this border spans over 1,400 miles, a large area of operations, much of which is relatively inaccessible to heavy conventional military forces. This exposes convoys and local concentrations of conventional forces to ambush and deprives them of timely reinforcement or rapid extrication. Since Pakistani neo-Taliban commanders and their fighters arise primarily from the FATA tribal areas and Pashtun districts of Baluchistan, the insurgency stems from areas inhabited by just a fraction of Pakistan's 26 million Pashtun people — 4 million in the tribal areas, or 6.5 million if one counts the Pashtun districts in Baluchistan. The latter figure represent perhaps one quarter of Pakistan's Pashtun population. Informed Pakistanis believe only a minority of those 6.5 million Pashtuns in the tribal areas and adjoining districts support the Taliban voluntarily, but the majority is not in a position to suppress the insurgents and the minority that supports them.
- The number of Pakistani Pashtuns who venture over the border for active Taliban combat operations in Afghanistan probably numbered only a few hundred in 2002-03 but may well now number in the low thousands, perhaps between three to five thousand at any given time, dispersed along with Afghan Taliban commanders and their Afghan recruits in various provinces and localities. The total ranks of the neo-Taliban in Pakistan who may be considered full-time soldiers today – and these are divided among a number of commanders and forces -- probably number less than ten thousand. A larger number of volunteers who live and work at home but could respond to calls to arms probably could triple those numbers, however, to about 30 thousand.

- For every Pakistani fighter the Taliban fields, however, one may surmise that approximately 20 to 30 other Pakistanis could be involved voluntarily in logistics, shelter, or other support of the Taliban, and that would translate into a larger active support population of between 600 thousand and 900 thousand. Of those involved in logistics and support, some are certainly present in NWFP and Baluchistan, but even that expanded estimate of support population is small compared to the larger Pashtun population, less than 4 per cent of Pakistani Pashtuns nationwide and perhaps 5 per cent of the population in the Pashtun belt. These numbers probably understate the general level of Pashtun “sympathy” for the Taliban’s political resistance to Western or Pakistan Army intrusions resulting from the “war on terrorism,” however. Hence, the levels of active support for the Taliban and several other ideologically compatible, Pashtun extremist groups -- such as the still existing anti-Soviet mujahiddin organizations of Jalaluddin Haqqani and Gulbuddin Hikmatyar – which have a presence in the settled Pashtun areas around Peshawar, could grow if the insurgency is not successfully resisted and contained by an effective combination of Pakistani military and political means. (For a list of the more important militant groups operating in Pakistan’s Pashtun belt, see Table 2 ahead)
- Before 2007, the insurgents in Pakistan’s Pashtun belt generally focused their insurgent activities on external targets, supporting Afghan Taliban fighting against US and NATO forces and posing challenges to the Karzai government of Afghanistan across the border. In 2007, several of the Pashtun insurgent groups turned their insurgent focus around directly against the state of Pakistan and its military institutions, creating a new and expanding challenge to Pakistan, to its newly elected government, and to US-Pakistan relations.

Pakistan's performance against the Taliban insurgency

There should be little doubt for the first four years after the launch of OEF in Afghanistan that the Musharraf government and the Pakistan Army made a genuine and sustained effort to seal the border and to curb cross-border insurgent activity from the Pakistan side.⁽¹⁹⁾ Initially, these efforts, despite a naturally porous border, actually succeeded in retarding the initiative of the Pakistani Taliban, evidenced by the fact that the larger Taliban movement failed for several years running to successfully mount strong “spring offensives” after the winter snow-melt in the mountains. However, the initial success of the Pakistani security and enforcement efforts in the Pashtun belt started to weaken gradually until the Pakistani campaign nearly fell apart altogether in the second half of 2007 and early 2008 as Pakistan moved towards national elections and Musharraf strove to ensure his continuity as President.

To evaluate Pakistan's uneven enforcement campaign objectively, the confluence of several political and technical factors that hampered Pakistan's capability to pursue the main mission in a manner that would have fully pleased the United States need to be understood objectively within the local and regional contexts:

(1) *As a matter of strategy*, the Musharraf government exercised calculated limits on its use of force in the tribal areas, prudently fearing that its military operations against its own Pashtun tribesmen could blow back in the form of a Taliban-instigated civil war, or, in more dire circumstances, incite a Pashtun secessionist movement and embroil Pakistan in a larger conflict with Afghanistan.

(2) *As an even more fundamental strategic concern*, the Pakistani security establishment watched the concurrent US courtship of India as an “emerging power” and potential strategic partner with deep concern that Pakistan's participation in the “war on terrorism” would increase

Pakistan's vulnerability to political and military threats from India.⁽²⁰⁾

(3) *As an early domestic political complication*, Pakistan's national elections in the fall of 2002 brought an alliance of Islamist parties (the Muttahida-Majlis-i-Amal, or MMA) into power at the provincial level in NWFP and into the governing coalition in Baluchistan, embracing the Pashtun belt with new legislators, mostly Pashtun, eager to move forward locally on an agenda of Islamization. The MMA ran on a platform that explicitly opposed the Western intervention in Afghanistan and castigated the displacement of the Taliban regime in Kabul as an act against Islam. Several of these Islamist parties had been sponsors of the anti-Soviet *mujahiddin* or of the original Afghan Taliban, had links with the new Taliban groups in Pakistan, and fostered an atmosphere that undermined the perceived legitimacy of Pakistan Army operations in support of the war on terror in the Pashtun belt.

(4) *As a foreign military power*, the Musharraf government expected that the technically sophisticated American and Coalition forces operating in Afghanistan would be far more successful in suppressing the Taliban resurgence inside Afghanistan than proved to be the case, increasing and protracting rather than reducing Pakistan's burden across the border. Without the distraction of Iraq, which came later, this could well have been the case.

(5) *As a technical, political and military problem of bilateral relations*, US military aid programmed specifically for Pakistan's counter-insurgency operations was both deficient and its provision was delayed due to US bureaucratic and Congressional procedures.

(6) *As a domestic military shortcoming*, Pakistan's military establishment initially overestimated its own capability for effective counter-insurgency efforts in the FATA portions of the Pashtun tribal belt where regular Army forces customarily were not deployed prior to the onset of the war on terrorism.⁽²¹⁾ Put another way, the Pakistani

establishment initially did not grasp realistically the potential for escalation of a radical Islamic armed campaign against Pakistan itself, given its self-described status as an Islamic Republic and homeland for Muslims of the subcontinent.

(7) *As a deficiency of the system of government:* The Musharraf government -- a military-civil hybrid that ran against Pakistan's constitutional norms, faced dwindling popular support for operations against the Taliban -- so that once a strong domestic political opposition surfaced in 2007 in reaction to the executive branch's handling of supreme court justices and in expectation of national elections, that government did not have the political capacity or ingenuity under the law to reverse that tide.⁽²²⁾

When Musharraf signed Pakistan up to President George Bush's demand in September 2001 that Pakistan join the "global war on terrorism," the complexities of the task for Islamabad were less obvious than they have become since. It was one thing for Pakistan to sever relations with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, make a good faith attempt to seal the naturally porous borders against illicit traffic, and undertake a like commitment to help root out al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan -- assisted in the latter by US technical intelligence. It was another thing for Pakistan, even with specialized military assistance from the United States, to successfully prevent pro-Taliban Pashtun groups in Pakistan from infiltrating through the myriad gaps in the mountainous border to aid the Taliban in Afghanistan. Crystallizing later, it was an even more serious problem for Pakistan to face Taliban-led Pashtun uprisings inside Pakistan itself, against the state.

The *counter-terrorism* mission — particularly against al-Qaeda — was clearer at the outset because, even though the top al-Qaeda hierarchy was based in Afghanistan in September, 2001, post-9/11 assessments determined that numerous al-Qaeda operatives were dispersed in Pakistan. The *counter-insurgency* mission against the Taliban in Pakistan was not so clear because in early 2002 this specific

threat had not yet physically materialized as a problem inside Pakistan. But the Pakistani security establishment that had assisted in the development of the Afghan Taliban could have had no illusions that such a threat could, and probably would, materialize eventually – because of the overlap of the Pashtun tribes in the Afghan-Pakistan borderland.

At the outset, the Musharraf government -- together with its civil and military appointees at the provincial levels in Peshawar and Quetta, including the Army corps commanders for those regions – seemed to believe they could handle likely Pashtun tribal militancy and reactions to Pakistan's security operations to seal the borders in traditional ways. Historically, intermittent rebellions and other unrest in the tribal areas had to be pacified, or allowed to burn out through natural causes. Pacification efforts often took the form of inducements offered by government agents assigned to the tribal agencies – monetary payments, help in finding jobs for relatives, or assistance in resolving disputes. Inducements to troublemakers were meant to persuade them to back off. Inducements could also be given to their rivals to help keep the troublemakers in line. “Divide and rule” of the fractious Pashtun tribes and clans was a time-tested approach from colonial days that traditionally offered economy of effort in restoring and maintaining order. But these techniques – even in the hands of senior federal and provincial officials, many of whom were themselves Pashtun in background -- did not suffice to prevent the new Pakistani Taliban movement gathering momentum. It was not only understandable but prudent for Pakistani decision-makers to use approaches toward their countrymen that would limit the risk of localized insurgents gathering the kind of broader Pashtun support that could plunge Pakistan into an expanding civil war.

Between 2004 and 2006, the US government, spurred by complaints from the Karzai government and increasingly from the commanders of US forces in eastern Afghanistan who detected the flow of Taliban reinforcements from

Pakistan, pressed the Musharraf government “to do more.” This phrase became a mantra in a two-way “blame game” that Pakistan also, finally, turned around on its US partner. The Musharraf government had stepped up its operations – including forays of the regular Army into the FATA agencies, but at considerable cost in soldiers’ lives and injuries. Outright Pakistani troop losses had reached about a thousand by 2007, an absolute number greater than the combined losses of US and NATO combat troops in Afghanistan. Islamabad also demanded that US and Afghan forces “do more” from the other side to seal the borders against incursions and wondered publicly why they were not more successful, given their employment of advanced surveillance and communications technology and much larger inventory of vehicles, helicopters and other aircraft.

The Musharraf government nevertheless varied the tactics in its “divide and rule” strategy in the Pashtun belt in attempts to negotiate formal peace agreements with influential Pashtun tribal leaders in key FATA agencies – agreements that sought to obligate the more cooperative Pashtun tribes to seek to expel or control “foreign” groups in their domains (e.g., the Arabs, Uzbeks, Chechens, see Table 2, on “Insurgent Organizations in Pakistan’s Pashtun Belt,” below), help prevent cross-border armed movement by Taliban groups, and refrain from attacking Pakistani security forces, in exchange for government undertakings to keep regular Pakistani forces outside of the same tribal domains. But these agreements either tended to break down under pressure from Taliban and other extremist Pashtun groups or became untenable for other reasons. They failed in any case to curb Taliban cross-border movement and generated suspicion in some Washington circles that elements of the Pakistan Army or the ISI (military intelligence service) were playing a double game. Certainly a number of other Pakistani political groups, particularly the activist arms of the Islamist political parties, encouraged the spread of the Pakistani Taliban in the tribal areas and provided a form of

domestic political cover for their cross-border actions in Afghanistan.

Table 2

Insurgent Organizations in Pakistan's Pashtun Belt				
Categories	Leaders	Area of Operations	Islamist Political Party Links	al Qaeda Linked
Legacy Mujahiddin (from Anti-Soviet War)				
Afghan Taliban - North Pashtun	Maulvi Jalaluddin Haqqani, legendary commander; and his son, Maulvi Sirajuddin Haqqani - northern Afghan Pashtuns	Afghanistan: Khost, Paktia province; FATA: North Waziristan	JI	Intimately
Afghan Taliban - South Pashtun	Mullah Omar – Emir	Eastern Afghanistan; and Quetta, Baluchistan	JUI-F	Implicitly
Hezb-i-Islami	Gulbuddin Hikmatyar - northern Afghan Pashtun; key commanders Kashmir Khan and Engineer Obaidullah	Afghanistan: Kunar Province; Doab District; Nuristan	JI	Yes
Contemporary Pakistani Taliban				
Tehrik-i-Taliban-i-Pakistan: actually a confederation of some 40 Pakistani Taliban groups	Chief - Beitullah Mehsud of Mehsud tribe; Deputy - Maulvi Farooq Mohammed	FATA: South and North Waziristan, Bajaur	MMA: JUI-F	Intimately
Taliban faction - Abdullah	Abdullah Mehsud	South Waziristan		Yes
Taliban faction - Ahmedzai Wazir, union of 14 former Taliban groups	Mullah Nazir, chief commander; Muhammad Umer, Sharif, Noor Islam, Maulvi Abbas and Javed	South Waziristan	MMA: JUI-F	Yes
Taliban Ahmedzai Wazir splinter	Commanders Ghulam Jan and Iftikhar	South Waziristan	MMA: JUI-F	Yes
Taliban Ahmedzai Wazir splinter	Commander Zanjeer	South Waziristan	Hezb-i-Islami and JI	Yes
Taliban faction - Sadiq Noor	Sadiq Noor	North Waziristan	MMA: JUI-F	Intimately
Taliban faction - Abu Kasha; cooperates with Uzbek groups	Abu Kasha, an Iraqi Arab; commanders Imanullah and Haq Nawaz Dawar	North Waziristan	N/A	Yes

Vice and Virtue Brigade	Haji Namdar	Khyber Agency	MMA: JUI, JI	Yes
Other Indigenous Militant Groups				
Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Mohammedi (TNSM, Movement to Establish Islamic Law)	Sufi Mohammad, and (his son-in-law) Maulana Fazlullah	Malakand and Swat, NWFP	JUI-F	
Lashkar-i-Islam (Army of Islam), actually a local "Mafia," not Taliban, and not cleric-run	Mangal Bagh Afridi	FATA: Khyber Agency	N/A	Not known
Foreign Groups				
al Qaeda	Osama bin Laden, Ayman-al-Zawahiri, et. al.	Locally and internationally	Islamic International Front (IIF)	
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU); reportedly also a hub for Chechens and Uighurs	former chief, Juma Namangani (nom de guerre); now Mullah Tohir Jan Yuldeshev	South Waziristan	IIF	Intimately
Uzbek group - Najim or Ijaz faction	Najimuddin Uzbek	North Waziristan		Yes

Two other points gradually became clear between 2002 and 2006. First, the regular units of the Pakistan Army were not geared for the emerging *counter-insurgency* challenge from the Taliban fighters in the Pashtun tribal belt -- psychologically, politically, or technically. Pakistani military training for conventional war is rigorous and the discipline of rank and file in regular formations is uncontested. But Punjabi and Urdu speaking Army field officers and their troops were uncomfortable operating in the Pashtun belt when they could not count on overwhelming force to cow adversaries, a condition difficult to sustain in a guerrilla war environment in the large stretches of wilderness terrain. Insurgent tactics of ambush, hit and run, and kidnapping of isolated soldiers were debilitating to regular

forces, when their exposed positions could not be rapidly reinforced or the units quickly extracted.

Civil affairs and political training of officers and men for counter-insurgency operations long fashionable in the US and British expeditionary forces had not been considered needed by an Army that trained to go to war against Indian conventional forces along well-defined and fortified front lines. Pakistan's political-military tools for countering occasional rebellions in the northwest – informants, human intelligence and lightly armed paramilitary or police forces – were occasionally overwhelmed by the Taliban counter-attacks that materialized.

Insurgents in the Pashtun belt know their own terrain, are adept at concealment, and have become better equipped and skilled in the 21st century in the use of radios, cellular phones, automatic weapons, explosives, and even rapid movement in off-road vehicles. More recently, they have begun exhibiting new skills with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and deployment of suicide-bombers into Pakistan's urban interior – techniques and tactics imported from the Middle East. Pakistani acknowledgment of its regular force and intelligence shortcomings in countering these insurgent threats operationally has come all too recently and appropriate remedies take time and resources to develop.

Second, US military assistance to Pakistan specifically for counter-terrorist operations was also underestimated, and what was agreed upon not only was meager but its transfer and thus efficient utilization has been plagued with delays. It is crucial for operations against insurgents in remote wilderness areas to be able to detect adversary movement and hideaways, and strike with surprise and precision, minimizing collateral damage when possible. It is equally crucial to be able to reinforce or extract troops under fire rapidly – before they are overwhelmed in surprise attacks by well-prepared, hidden forces. The latter has become an increasingly common occurrence as the Taliban

insurgency inside Pakistan has gained strength and especially after it turned against the state.

Modern communications and surveillance equipment are crucial for effective use of force and minimization of collateral damage. Well-maintained and sufficient numbers of armed helicopters and fixed wing aircraft with night instruments and guided weapons are a necessity for rapid reaction, given the distances from regular military bases and broken terrain in the tribal belt. Provision of night vision devices to ground troops is vital for border monitoring and for remote commando operations. These items were in short supply in the Pakistani armed forces and some items, such as highly sensitive night vision devices provided by the United States are kept on a short leash by American operators, presumably to prevent their loss to the adversary or sale in the black market. Such shortages naturally inhibit the commitment of Pakistani field commanders who are called on to risk their soldiers' lives by search and destroy operations against concealed guerrilla adversaries.

By 2006, Pakistani regular forces had suffered a significant number of painful Taliban ambushes on vehicle convoys and counterattacks on exposed force concentrations. In a few particularly humiliating instances, fast-moving Taliban forces isolated and kidnapped groups of soldiers, typically executing a few of the captured personnel to send a message, and using the others to negotiate with the central authorities for the release of Taliban prisoners captured earlier by the Army. Such setbacks were bound to stir some level of demoralization among the rank and file in other units deployed to the tribal areas. Their commanders were forced to face the hard reality that the Taliban were no longer just fighting to protect their local freedom of action within their tribal habitat but were beginning, incipiently, to mount an offensive war against neighboring settled areas and the state of Pakistan.

Dealing with such a threat would require broad and deep public support, deeper than the Musharraf government

could muster without enlisting broader political participation in governance and a fresh mandate through new national elections. Moreover, generating this support would have to face up to the growing public opposition to Pakistan's involvement in the US-led "war on terrorism." The prevailing view that crystallized among Pakistanis, and not just in the tribal belt, was that this was "America's war," not Pakistan's. The political movement against Musharraf cynically stigmatized him (and the Army) as a tool of the United States. The effect was both to propagate and harden the popular view that the war on terrorism was an American mechanism for remote control over Pakistan. Public opposition to Pakistani military action in the tribal belt reinforced the conviction in Pakistan's political and military establishment that risking alienation of the Pashtun population in the border areas was contrary to Pakistan's national interest. Counter-insurgent operations would, if they were to be sustained, require a more politically sophisticated approach. It would also call for a broader framework of US assistance.

As a result, by 2006 the Musharraf government and the Bush administration in Washington had begun working out a broader, so-called "multi-pronged" strategy to counter the Taliban insurgency in Pakistan, even as the United States, the NATO allies and various NGOs worked along similar lines in Afghanistan. The basic idea was to go beyond military enforcement tools to define and fund development projects in the border areas that would generate employment, raise the level of economic activity, build infrastructure, and provide new educational and medical facilities – all as alternatives to a harsh tribal environment that makes it easy to recruit and indoctrinate young men in radical Islamist ideology for armed conflict. This would be coupled with efforts to ensure local security and empowerment of traditional leaders outside the radicalized stream of Taliban groups, and amnesty for those who voluntarily abandon armed radical agendas. In Afghanistan,

this process is justified by the need for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of an entire country after more than thirty years of internal war. In Pakistan, the urgent need for insurgent pacification lies in a particular ethno-linguistic region, not throughout the country, and thus calls for a somewhat different rationale. But to be successful, it must be a rationale that Pakistanis take ownership of as a nation. It is a matter that the newly elected coalition government in Islamabad has yet to come to terms with.

Islamic radicalism or extremism – which gives rise to what most of the world regards as one subset of religious forms of terrorism — is both a narrower and broader problem. To outsiders looking at Pakistan today, Islamic radicalism may seem to be concentrated in the Taliban movement and in other religious extremist groups in the Pashtun belt – and they are indeed prominent examples and sources of its agitation. But neither Islamic extremism nor terrorism is an ethno-linguistic or regional problem per se. Both Islamic extremism and terrorism are networked throughout Pakistan and Afghanistan, and indeed subsist in various forms not only in Muslim countries generally but in countries with significant Muslim minorities, often resident in the urban interior, and not necessarily only in the poorest sectors of the population. To control these problems will require a wider and probably much longer effort by the moderate Muslim mainstream to reform Islamic institutions.

Generically, reforming Islamic institutions to curb religious extremism is not likely to be an explicit focus of US-Pakistani cooperation, nor is it a focus of this paper. But it cannot be outside the cognizance of that bilateral channel entirely because al-Qaeda and its affiliates – terrorists with international reach and overseas operations – claim to act in the name of religion but must be fought directly, and the institutions and organizations that shelter them should no longer be immune from action against their complicity. It is doubtful that al-Qaeda's chief and the Afghan Taliban's *emir* could have been concealed for the last seven years in

Pakistan by the Pakistani Taliban movement alone, and without the material involvement of radical Islamist urban networks. That said, a strategy for extinguishing the Taliban insurgency, critical in its own right, almost certainly would increase the likelihood also of al-Qaeda exposure. Most outsiders will hope that the latter will not take that long.

The strategy of development, pacification, and integration

The focus of a Pakistani strategy for extinguishing the Taliban insurgency should be based on the principle of integrating the Pashtun tribal belt on Pakistan's side of the Durand Line into the regular constitutional framework of the modern state of Pakistan. The autonomous tribal frameworks of FATA and PATA are now historical anachronisms that should be replaced by a Pakistani national framework. This cannot be done just by legal fiat, of course, nor can it be done without corresponding measures in the adjoining Pashtun provinces of Afghanistan. The Pashtun region that overlaps both countries will continue to exist, and ideally the links of lineage among tribes and clans, and natural interaction and trade across the border would not be severed – nor would that be physically possible or desirable between two democratically governed countries. But the international border must be defined, demarcated, and recognized by both countries legally. The urgency of pacifying the twin insurgencies provides the justification for this course of action. Successful pacification of the insurgencies would remove the most obvious rationale for militarized borders. As to integration into the constitutional system, FATA and PATA could be merged with the existing NWFP province, or FATA could be integrated and established as a fifth Pakistani province.

For its part, Afghanistan's resistance to this aim must be overcome – while internationally funded reconstruction and rehabilitation are underway and while a UN presence

exists. Within Pakistan, the lingering Pashtun objections and broader Pakistani strategic doubts about the wisdom of this course must also be resolved. Pashtun residents on either side of the line should become full citizens – recognized nationals -- of the state in which they reside. Adjustments for Afghan refugees still in Pakistan would also be made, of course, through resettlement, or assimilation, as may be appropriate. Dealing with the details of border demarcation and ruffled ethno-linguistic feathers will not be easy, but surely will be preferable to the currently combustible setting and propensity to low-intensity warfare in the Afghan-Pakistan borderland. This is a project that Afghanistan's and Pakistan's neighbours have no reason to oppose and probably would support as a contribution to stability.

In US-Pakistani negotiations which are naturally driven on the US side by its interest in countering the Taliban insurgencies, the economic focus has been on fundable concepts of development in the Pashtun tribal areas, especially in FATA. To that end, the Government of Pakistan has sponsored a comprehensive policy framework entitled "Frontier Strategy" that aims to advance economic and social development as well as more effective means of governance in the tribal areas. Part of this "Frontier Strategy" framework is a Pakistani Sustainable Development Plan for the expenditure of \$2 billion over nine years, and the plan has been presented to the World Bank, the European Union, the Group of Eight, and other potential donors. The United States, United Kingdom, Japan and Australia have already agreed to partner with Pakistan in the implementation of elements of this plan, supplementing Pakistani resource commitments. The plan emphasizes basic unmet needs and would adopt measures to improve services, upgrade infrastructure, promote an environmentally sound use of natural resources, stimulate trade, commerce and industry, and increase government capacity in the tribal areas. It would aim to build schools for public education, introduce medical and public health facilities, and introduce

new water supplies. The US administration has made a commitment to contribute \$750 million to this plan over five years beginning in FY 2007 for support of infrastructure development, maternal & child health, education and capacity building initiatives in Pakistan's tribal areas and border regions. The US Agency for International Development (AID) has programmes underway in the tribal and border areas focused on delivery of medical services and on supporting small-scale community development projects in drinking water, health, girls' education, and government capacity building. Another US-Pakistani cooperative scheme that requires Congressional action would create Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs), to stimulate the formation of local manufacturing, mining, and agricultural enterprises that would produce exportable products and be able to ship them to the United States free of tariffs.⁽²³⁾

The existing multi-faceted strategy in Pakistan also has a security focus. The United States has agreed to support Pakistan's Security Development Plan, a six-year programme to help enable Pakistan to secure the border with Afghanistan. One facet is Pakistan's commitment to the expansion of the Pashtun-based Frontier Corps, with projected US assistance in training and equipment. Other features include US Department of Defense commitments to help train, equip, and strengthen the Pakistan Army's special operations units, particularly the Special Services Group and its helicopter mobility unit, and the 21st Quick Reaction Squadron, for effective combat operations in the tribal areas. Other measures have been taken to improve local coordination of Afghan, Pakistani, US and NATO forces operating in the border region, and to upgrade cooperation in intelligence analysis and communication of threat identification.

These steps begin to flesh out a comprehensive strategy for development and more effective counter-insurgency operations in the Pashtun belt. But they will need to be augmented and sustained, with the continued

application of lessons learned from experience. The building of road, water and modern communications infrastructure will be laborious, and the micro-projects under economic, community development, education and health programmes will take time to make their positive effects evident. To move these programmes forward most expeditiously, it may be crucial also to begin the formulation of plans and mechanisms to integrate the tribal areas into existing or new provincial structures, and extend full-fledged electoral, police and judicial systems to the tribal areas, with freedom of political parties to extend their operations there legally and transparently.

A process of full integration of the Pakistani Pashtun tribal areas is likely to last for at least two decades. There should be no illusions about that. Economic reconstruction and development in Afghanistan may take even longer. The resources needed are large, but a tiny fraction of those that have been spent and that are still being consumed by US forces in Iraq at roughly the rate of \$10 billion a month. US so-called “assistance” to Pakistan since 9/11 has totalled about \$11 billion over 6 years (versus one month’s expenditure in Iraq), and at least 40 per cent of that amount made over to Pakistan has been reimbursement for Pakistan’s expenses in logistical and fuel support for US operations through facilities in Pakistan, or for in mounting Pakistan’s own security operations in support of the war on terror. It is a frugal sum by comparison with what Pakistan has put into the effort and in no way compensates for losses of life in Pakistan.

What is now required from the United States for joint action in Afghanistan and with Pakistan against the Taliban – taking into account support for the development of the Pashtun tribal areas -- will barely double current US assistance rates in each country (the absolute amounts are much higher in Afghanistan than Pakistan, of course, because upwards of 30,000 US soldiers have been operating there in combat for over six years, and the bill for

reconstruction of past war damage is large). US assistance can and will be supplemented by other contributions mustered through international cooperation over time. If the insurgency security problems can be mitigated successfully – and this may be feasible over the next 5 to 7 years — the combined security and economic expenditures called for will be well spent. Looking back 20 or 30 years from now, the financial cost of the overall effort will seem quite modest by comparison with how expensive some may feel it looks today.

Notes and References

1. For two vignettes on successful American military and civilian adaptation to ethnographic realities with micro-development efforts that win local favour and engage local tribal councils to help improve local security in Kamdesh and Kunar in northeastern Afghanistan, see David Ignatius, “Building Bridges in the Back of Beyond,” *The Washington Post*, May 1, 2008, p. A-19.
2. Other ‘foreign’ extremists active in the Afghan-Pakistan borderland include Uzbeks under the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Chechens from the insurgency in Russia’s Chechen Republic, and Uighur dissidents from China’s Xinjiang province.
3. The newly elected government formed in Islamabad in March ostensibly was a popular, centrist, governing coalition of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N, or Nawaz Sharif faction), and the NWFP-based Awami National Party (ANP), the latter being the heir to a secular Pashtun nationalist tradition in that province, and quite different from the *Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal* (MMA) alliance of five Islamist political parties that won the provincial elections in the NWFP in 2002 and held local power there through 2007. The PML-N withdrew its appointees to ministries in the newly formed cabinet of the federal governing coalition in April in a rupture over the Supreme Court Justices issue – without, however, terminating its support of the new government entirely; the PML-N is the dominant partner in a coalition with the PPP in the Punjab provincial government, where Nawaz Sharif’s brother, Shahbaz Sharif, was installed as Chief

Minister. In this kaleidoscopic political arena, the Fazlur Rahman faction of the pro-Taliban Islamist party, the *Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam* (JUI-F), also joined the PPP-led federal coalition, contributing to the new government's disarray in dealing with the proliferation of Taliban-fomented mini-insurgencies within Pakistan. The JUI-F also joined a PPP-led coalition as a minority partner in the government of Baluchistan province. In Sindh province, the traditional base of the PPP, the PPP-led provincial government drew the former rival MQM, a party of urban-based Urdu-speakers, into the government. At the federal level too, the MQM recently decided to join the coalition.

4. Baitullah Mehsud is also a prime suspect in the Karachi bombing of Benazir Bhutto's motorcade upon her return to Pakistan on October 18, 2007. While she narrowly escaped injury in that attack, it caused some 139 deaths and at least 450 injured among the assembled throng.
5. The TNSM is a militant Deobandi organization in northwestern Pakistan. Its objective is to overthrow the modern state apparatus and establish a *caliphate* under Islamic law based on the 7th century model of Prophet Muhammad in Madina.
6. Maulvi Fazlullah was nicknamed "FM Radio Fazlullah" for his creation and use of an illegal FM radio station for propaganda. He instigated a campaign of violence against the authorities in Swat district, a tourist hill destination in NWFP, in early November 2007, just as the national electoral campaign got underway. Fazlullah's armed militants launched a full-fledged assault on urban police stations in Swat, causing the flight of the local authorities and the retreat of local and regular security forces. Fazlullah's organization began setting up symbols of Islamic authority, including Islamic courts. Musharraf was forced to declare an Emergency in Swat district and it took several weeks of planning and build-up by the Pakistan Army before it moved regular forces into Swat valley in mid-December to counter-attack the militants, drive them into the mountains, and restore order and provincial authority. Restoring order was short-lived, however. Taliban-fomented waves of violence recurred as the newly elected government of Pakistan was formed and violent unrest persisted in Swat through July 2008, despite negotiations and supposed "peace agreements" with the new ANP-led government of NWFP.
7. *The Washington Post*, April 30, 2008, p. A-19.

8. The new fashion in the media and some commentaries, Pakistani as well as Western, is to talk about “the *Talibanization* of Pakistan,” a variant on the older fashion of describing Pakistan as on the verge of being “a failed state.” While these catchy terms get attention, they are overdrawn. That said, they do point to negative trends in Pakistan that threaten its capacity to maintain stability and steady progress towards modernization, economic development, full-fledged democratic institutions, and confidence in the future. There is little doubt that as long as parts of Pakistan are hospitable to groups that promote domestic and international terrorism, Pakistan’s potential for prosperity at home and a respected role in international fora are unlikely to be fulfilled.
9. The best account of the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s is still Ahmed Rashid’s, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.
10. The traditional Pashtun cultural traits and their tribal resilience in the mountainous areas, with ethnographic details, are aptly described in Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason’s “No Sign until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier,” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Spring 2008, pp. 41-77.
11. “The Pushtun have provided the central leadership for Afghanistan since the eighteenth century when Ahmad Khan Abdali of Kandahar established the Durrani Empire. This one-time general in Nadir Shah’s Persian army was elected to power in 1747 at a Pashtun tribal *jirgah*, an assembly which takes decisions by consensus. The legitimacy of his rule was sanctioned at the same time by the *ulama* (religious scholars) (see Ahmad Shah and the Durrani Empire, ch.1). Ahmad Khan assumed the title of *Durr-i-Durran* (Pearl of Pearls) and was henceforth known as Ahmad Shah Durrani and his tribe, the Pushtun Abdali tribe, as the Durrani. When his successors lost the support of the tribes after Ahmad Shah’s death in 1772, control passed to the Mohammadzai lineage within the Barakzai section of the Durrani Pushtun.” See US Library of Congress country studies, “Afghanistan,” accessed at: [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+af0037\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+af0037)).
12. Covering about 10,500 square miles, FATA today contains seven “Agencies”: Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan. Earlier in Pakistan’s evolution, former tribal agencies as well as four

- former “princely states” north of Peshawar were attached to or incorporated in the NWFP and other Pashtun areas into Baluchistan. See current map of FATA (p.66).
13. For a study of the historical Muslim precursors – then based deeply in cities of British India -- of the contemporary radical movements in the Pashtun belt, see Philip E. Jones, “The ‘Sunni Revolution’ and Politics in Pakistan: The Rise of the Deobandi Ulama,” in Richard Bonney, ed., *US-Pakistan Relations: Thwarting Global Terrorism*, Conference Proceedings, Institute for the Study of Pakistan Relations, University of Leicester, and Asian Studies Programme, Georgetown University, Leicester, 2004, pp. 47-110; available on the Internet (the article begins on page 39), at: http://www.eiwo.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=13&Itemid=37.
 14. Three activist Islamist political parties and their affiliates with nationwide urban reach have been core sponsors of radical Islamic outreach in the Pashtun borderland: (1) the *Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam* (JUI) with competing factions, one led by Maulana Fazlur Rahman and the other by Maulana Sami-ul-Haq, both exponents of the *Deobandi* school of Islam (with doctrinal similarities to the *Wahhabi* school of Saudi Arabia); and (2) the *Jama'at-i-Islami* (JI), founded in colonial India by Maulana Maudoodi, as an Islamic revivalist organization with ideological affinities akin to the Muslim Brotherhood (*Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimun*) of Egypt and the Middle East, and now led in Pakistan by NWFP-born (urbanized Pashtun) Qazi Hussain Ahmad; and (3) the *Jamiat-i-Ahl-i-Hadith* (JAH), a smaller, tightly knit, and more secretive outgrowth of Muslim reform in British India, once known in British India as the “Indian Wahhabis”.
 15. There is an earlier history of seminary-based activists promoting radical Islam in the Pashtun areas that dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries and British colonial rule in India. The radicalization of Islamic belief systems in the subcontinent had its seminal origins in Islamic reform movements emanating from Delhi in reaction to the surrounding decay of the Mughal Empire and the encroachment of the British. The Islamic reform movement took a variety of forms but among them it spawned two radical streams in north India, the *Jamaat-i-Ahl-i-Hadith* (labeled “Indian Wahhabis” and regarded as subversives by the British, visible before the 1857 Mutiny as the Patna Jamaat, in Bihar, they went underground thereafter) and the *Deobandi* Movement, identified with a

seminary north of Delhi in the town of Deoband. The radical reformers attributed the setbacks of Muslim rule in India to Muslim practices falling away from the tenets of Islam, and sought to purify Islam on the basis of concepts and principles that resembled in part those of the 18th century Wahhabi movement of Nejd, Arabia. These Indian Muslim reform movements implicitly challenged the legitimacy of British rule, but for the most part did not openly confront it in the heart of India. They developed doctrines of *jihad*, however, as the justification for active and armed resistance to rule by non-Muslims and also unjust rule by Muslims over Muslims. They sought to spread their ideas in most of India quietly, but in the Pashtun northwest, where direct British colonial rule stopped and British influence was weak, they actively promoted their ideas in attempts to create caliphate-like Islamic states, succeeding, albeit for just a few weeks, in one case, in Peshawar. See Philip E. Jones, "The 'Sunni Revolution' and Politics in Pakistan: The Rise of the Deobandi Ulama," op. cit.

16. The intricacies and tensions among US, Saudi, and Pakistani covert operations in funding, arming and training the Afghan guerilla resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the maneuvering for power among rival Afghan *mujahiddin* organizations after the Soviet exit are described extensively in Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, New York: Penguin Books, 2004.
17. An unwritten code of individual and group conduct, the core values of *Pashtunwali* revolve around lineage (the tribe or clan), honor (*nang*) and retribution or revenge (*badal*), the protection of "*zar, zan, zamin*" (gold, women, and land), and hospitality to guests (*mailmastia*). It is an admixture of communal, patriarchal and egalitarian impulses, and readily embraces either bargaining or combat in varying circumstances. It is not based on Islam, but has, as a practical matter, absorbed Islamic faith and teachings.
18. Pashtun-dominated districts in Baluchistan include Zhob, Killa Saifullah, Ziarat, Pishin, Musakhel, Loralai, Killa Abdullah and Barkhan. In several of these districts, however, the total population is very small.
19. The one exception to this pattern in the first months – possibly fateful, in retrospect, since it permitted the escape of the al-Qaeda central command through the snow and down the slopes into Pakistan's tribal areas -- was Pakistan's emergency response to India's mounting of a military

confrontation (Operation *Parakram*) on Pakistan's eastern border lasting from late December, 2001 to October, 2002. India mobilized for a possible war against Pakistan in reaction to the Muslim terrorist attack on India's Parliament on December 13, 2001, an attack which India blamed on Pakistan. India's mobilization forced Pakistan in turn to call back regular forces that had just been deployed west to seal the Afghan border against incursion, needing them to support its core defense forces in Punjab to guard against the contingency of an Indian invasion from the east. Pakistan's withdrawal occurred in late December 2001, when US and Afghan forces believed they had Osama bin Laden pinned down in the mountains at Tora Bora, close to the Pakistan border.

20. India's ten-month mobilization threatening war made the point vividly (see footnote 19, *supra*.)
21. In accordance with Pakistan's regulations for autonomy in FATA, the Pakistan Army did not operate in the tribal agencies at all prior to 2000, and built up its operations there mainly from 2002, after the onset of the war on terrorism in Afghanistan. Pakistan's regular Army forces in the northwest were based primarily in the settled areas of the Pashtun belt -- in and around Peshawar and Quetta, or along the road axes to the two official border crossing points into Afghanistan at Chaman in Baluchistan and Torkham in NWFP. The main force manning the border and numerous smaller border crossings has been Pakistan's Frontier Corps, a paramilitary force officered by regular Army detailees and some 80,000 troops recruited mainly from the Pashtun belt, including the tribal areas. Within the autonomous tribal areas, policing has been left principally to tribal levies or *khassadars* loosely supervised by Agents delegated by the government to each tribal agency.
22. While the Musharraf government sought to bend the national Constitution and law to its purposes and delayed the full restoration of parliamentary rule, it sought to stay within its own understanding of the rule of law and stopped well short of the use of extra-legal force for outright repression. The vilification campaign against Musharraf by some of his opponents greatly exaggerated the democratic shortcomings of his administration. It never resembled classical dictatorships nor adopted comparably ruthless procedures to torture, intimidate and physically eliminate political opponents. In this regard, the Musharraf government respected and preserved a

basis for civility in governance that augurs well for Pakistan's future, and that may be better appreciated as passions of the moment subside.

23. See "Pakistan's Fata Challenge: Securing One of the World's Most Dangerous Areas," Testimony by John D. Negroponte, Deputy Secretary of State, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC, May 20, 2008.

Afghanistan's Importance to Future Peace & Stability of South Asia

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The problems of Afghanistan today arguably may have started with the creation of the country as a 'buffer zone' between the competing 19th century empires of Russia and Great Britain. It has been argued that before, what was known as "the Great Game" between these two empires, the region in which Afghanistan is situated had a form of common civilisation. From Turkey through Iran to northern India there was an area joined by common trade routes, including the Silk Route, It was an area which was not ruled by one ruler, but which had common interest and trading practice based on trade and economic prosperity.

The "Great Game" changed that order and Afghanistan which was, and is, the geographical link between the north and south, and east and west of the region became isolated, thus breaking the existing traditional trade and communication routes. There was also the question of the Durand Line which was agreed on between the British and the Amir of Kabul in 1895, but still remains an issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The British found the tribes which inhabited the strategic areas on either side of the

Durand Line, later to become the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), so difficult to deal with that they gave them autonomy in governing their own affairs.

Afghanistan became isolated from the outside world. This isolation made the country a virtual island which would be slow to evolve as a state. Today it remains in a condition of slow development with feudalistic social structures within which people have low expectations. This unbreakable feudalism and tribal cultures compete with the Western style democracy which the government and its allies seek to impose. The imposition of a secular Western-style legal code also clashes with Sharia and Pushtun laws.

At the same time as the British were struggling with the question of the tribes, a Muslim sect [school of thought] was being born in the town of Deoband in northern India. The Deobandis were to give birth to the culture espoused by today's Taliban. It is a culture which is fundamentalist in nature and has become interwoven with Pushtun tribal traditions to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to find a difference between the two — at least to the outsider. There is an ingrained desire to resist modernisation of the Afghan state. On independence in 1919 the ruling monarch, King Amanullah, tried to institute social reforms but had to flee in 1929, arguably because of the unpopularity of his modernising agenda. This agenda was reversed by the Pushtun King Nadir Shah who succeeded him. Nadir Shah's successor Zahir Shah, and Daoud, his prime minister, sought help from the Soviet Union in 1953 to modernise the state institutions and a certain amount of progress was made in this context. Overall the history of Afghanistan shows a resistance to reform and modernisation.

It can be argued that modernisation along non-traditional lines was as much to do with bringing about the crisis that led to the Soviet invasion as any desire simply to remove the foreign ideology of communism. The parties who resisted the invasion, namely the Mujahideen and their

Western backers, had a common aim of dislodging the Soviet Union and its army from Afghanistan, but for different reasons. The Mujahideen wanted simply to remove foreigners with an alien culture from their country regardless of their ideology. The West saw an opportunity to fight its Cold War enemy, the USSR, by proxy. Today there is a Western-backed non-traditional Afghan government trying to impose non-traditional legal institutions and practices in the same way as the communists did. It can also be argued that despite their indigenous character the Taliban were also unsuccessful. They imposed a non-modernising code which was tolerated by some, enforced with brutality, and rejected by others. But they were of course mostly Afghan Pushtuns and not foreign.

In a sense the Soviet invasion set the scene for the current conflict. There was a paradox of US involvement on the side of the Mujahideen resistance movement simultaneously with Western aid being donated not just to the resistance but also to the madrasas of the North-West Frontier Province. Many of these madrasas were and are Deobandi in origin. The West was fighting a battle against communism and to some extent so were the mujahideen. But in reality the Afghan battle was against a foreign invader, communist or not – just as it had been in the days of the British empire; a foreign invader who threatened to change the Pushtun way of life. So it was that General Gareev (Najibullah's Soviet advisor) wrote in his book, "My Last War" that the biggest mistake of the Soviets was to ignore and misunderstand the Pushtun factor. That is exactly the problem facing us today. How to persuade the Afghans that the Western-led forces are not there as occupiers or invaders. They are in support of the government they elected as against the case with the previous foreign involvements.

Only time, it seems, can be the arbiter of a peaceful evolution in Afghanistan. Notions of imposing foreign ideologies such as communism or Western democracy have proved mostly unsuccessful. The majority of Afghans having

at first been enthused by the democratic process have become disillusioned and may now want to live by their own rules and codes. Peaceful evolution in Afghanistan is the only way that the region from Central to South Asia, and from Iran to Bangladesh can return to the sort of prosperity that existed before the “Great Game”. Such an evolution logically requires cooperation between the regional states. Yet an observer would note that the chances of cooperation in the region to help Afghanistan to some kind of rebirth leading to progress are remote.

The competitive tendencies of the history of the region remain deep-rooted and ignore the modern realities of globalisation and transnational threats. The presence of the NATO in Afghanistan with thirty-seven countries involved and authority mandated by the UN is still seen through the prism of history by some countries including Russia which is dominant in Central Asia. Iran’s ‘battle’ with the US has become mixed up in the Afghan conflict with assistance being given to the political opposition, the United Afghan National Front, which stands against Karzai, and increasing signs of possible ‘irregular’ Iranian support to the Taliban-led insurgency. Pakistan has concerns about Indian involvement in the country and so on.

Ongoing and emerging threats

The region in which Afghanistan is located provides a snapshot of the main 21st century threats which afflict the global community as a whole. Some are ongoing and increasing such as terrorism and trafficking. Others are emerging, such as threats posed by disease and climate change. Whichever category of threat is considered the common thread is that they all ignore boundaries. Yet despite this growing trend the conflicts of the region remain mostly territorial in nature and provide conditions in which trans-national threats may thrive and grow. Afghanistan, Kashmir, Sri Lanka and the problems of the north-east of

India all have territory as a main cause, albeit not necessarily the only one. Nepal, now a resolving conflict, was more about ideology as much as the other root causes such as poverty and low standards of living. And the internal security problems of Bangladesh have a religious dimension not so far removed from ideology.

Since 9/11 and the rapid removal of the Taliban with the terrorist training camps that existed in Afghanistan, the shape of terrorism in the region has not changed so much as diversified. On the international front al-Qaeda has increased its involvement in the insurgency in Afghanistan feeding off the security allowed by the topography of the country and motivated by the presence of the organisation's sworn enemy, the US and its allies in the country. As a result, whilst 'conventional' guerrilla warfare continues, the insurgency has attained a more terroristic nature with tactics imported from outside such as suicide attacks. For Pakistan it is possible that an increase in this style of activity is beginning to emerge in the heart of the country and not just in the NWFP and the FATA. The problems of Pakistan's leadership and its staunch support for the US-led 'war on terror' have made it more of a target for radical extremism. In a sign of a further diversion of terrorism it was reported recently by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) that regional militant groups may have joined hands with al-Qaeda to pursue their aims more effectively. The groups referred to were Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba which reportedly joined an al-Qaeda umbrella group based in North Waziristan led by a Tunisian national.

India is suffering from an increase in terrorist activity in a number of population centres. Whilst the style of these attacks may lead analysts to conclude that they bear the hallmarks of Kashmiri militant groups, the important aspect to focus on is that they may have more to do with wider extremism than Kashmir. India, too, is linked to the US and is closely involved in helping to rebuild Afghanistan against the wishes of al-Qaeda and its allies. The north-east of India

also continues to be unstable with outside influences playing a role.

The illicit trade in opium product and heroin from Afghanistan is also increasing according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2007 Report, although the total acreage under cultivation has decreased. The effect of the Afghan production of illicit drugs has caused a rise in drug abuse in the countries of Central and South Asia with all the social and health problems, including HIV/AIDS that ride on the back of this trade which degrades societies. The Europeans and Russians who are the main recipients of the Afghan crop know this well but are unable to deal with the problem on their streets without assistance at the source. It is incorrect to put the blame on Afghan farmers and to remove their only source of income and livelihood for their families through eradication programmes. A long range coherent programme of replacement and incentives backed by investment is probably the only viable solution. This can only be achieved by a concerted effort by all countries which are affected, some of whom have their own cultivation and production problem as well as that of drug abuse.

‘The Baltimore Sun’ published an article by Ashraf Haidari on 27th of August which made the point. Inter alia Haidari wrote “...even with international support, transnational drug traffickers will continue to permeate Afghanistan's borders and undermine the rule of law in the absence of coordinated prosecution and enforcement efforts among Afghanistan, its neighbours and consumer countries. All of Afghanistan's neighbours have a vested interest in reducing opium poppy cultivation and trade. In addition to facing the continued destabilizing effect of the Taliban insurgency, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbours now face the problems associated with having millions of drug abusers and rising HIV/AIDS infection rates from needle-sharing...”

It is easy to comment that in this age of globalisation threats such as terrorism and its companion trafficking,

which funds terror spread easily. Transport networks and the internet are facilitators which enable the relative seamless movement of trafficked goods, whether they are drugs, weapons or humans to virtually anywhere in the world. Notions of national territory and national boundaries inhibit thinking on how to cope with this virtual explosion in non-state activity. So there is a contradiction in trying to deal with non-traditional non-state threats using traditional inter and intra-state mechanisms.

One emerging threat is that posed by climate change which may affect this region more than any other. In this instance Afghanistan is not at the centre of the threat but is one of a collection of countries which are about to be affected by it. Glacial melt caused by rising temperatures brings initial flooding followed by water shortages. Satellite images of the western Himalayas show that the glaciers feeding the Amu Darya river system, which is of crucial importance to northern Afghanistan, will have virtually disappeared by 2020. Already some Soviet era reservoirs such as the Tokta-gul reservoir in Kyrgyzstan have overflowed with downstream effects in Uzbekistan. Once the water level starts to drop other effects can emerge such as the mass migrations of people seeking new fertile lands as well as new access to water. With glacial melt occurring in the southern Himalayas the same effects are likely to occur. Mass migration across territorial boundaries is one effect which will cause tension between neighbours as well as internally within countries as they cope with internal migration and famine. In this context the need to open routes for transportation of food and aid will become more important and the traditional position of Afghanistan at the regional crossroads of trade and transport will become a vital part of any effort to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The threat posed by climate change raises the question of what is being done to plan for it at a cooperative regional level and what mechanisms exist for such a contingency. The same question could be asked in respect of

the catastrophic effects of other disasters such as the devastating earthquake that caused so much suffering in Pakistan in October 2005. The observation has to be made that although there was a considerable international aid effort, Pakistan had to carry perhaps more of the burden in dealing with the disaster than was reasonable to expect. Paradoxically, the presence of the NATO troops in neighbouring Afghanistan enabled extra helicopters and engineers to be deployed in support of Pakistan. Yet it seemed that India was constrained from assisting due to the traditional problems that beset India-Pakistan relations. This is an example of the legacy of history impeding a reaction to crisis in the modern era. It is an impediment which is peculiar to this region.

An example of how the catastrophic effects of climate change, or earthquake, may also occur in an even more dramatic way in the future, there is the relatively high risk of catastrophe associated with Lake Sarez in Tajikistan. In 1911 an earthquake created a 500-metre high natural barrier at an altitude of 3,000 metres above sea level in the Tajik area of the Pamir Mountains. As a result of the creation of what became known as the Usoi barrier, Lake Sarez was formed. The lake contains about 17 cubic kilometres of water, equivalent to about half the water of Lake Geneva but at a height of 3,000 metres. Should an earthquake, landslide or excess water cause the barrier to shift, the potential effect would be the largest flood in the history of mankind and would destroy habitation for an estimated 1,000kms to the west.

All of these threats, contemporary or emerging, raise one obvious point: no single country can deal with a single threat of today's dimensions on its own. There has to be cooperation and coordinated inter-state activity of a kind which is not usually associated with this part of Asia. Afghanistan's geographic location as the state which links the regional states and lies astride the potential trade routes, yet also is affected most by contemporary threats, is

therefore a critical component in any cooperative venture. If this does not happen it can be argued that the ongoing conflict could once again become a civil war of the type that existed before 2001.

In addressing the legacy of Afghanistan's history and the potential dangers for the region, President Hamid Karzai made the point at the April summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) when he said. *"...Stark lessons can be learnt from Afghanistan's political and economic isolation. More than two decades of conflict resulting from occupation and foreign interference inhibited economic and political development.....We all know what came next: terrorism and criminality plagued Afghanistan with detrimental consequences for all of us.....Afghanistan's political and economic isolation must never be repeated. Instead, enhanced economic cooperation must be pursued for the sake of regional economic and political stability..."*

Cooperation or competition

The question is how can cooperation be increased in an environment which is rife with complex conflicts? The regional cooperative organisations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the SAARC may provide the best prospects in the short and medium-term. Whereas the SAARC has always had trade and economic development at its heart, the SCO has been a security-driven organisation concentrated on cross-border security issues. This is now changing and trade and energy are firmly on the SCO agenda to the extent that Russia has proposed forming an "energy club". Crucially both SCO and SAARC have within their memberships the two countries emerging as the world's major economic powers, China and India. With Russia as a lead member of the SCO with all her natural resources and the Central Asian states, notably Kazakhstan,

with fast-growing economic prospects, the future for the region could be regarded with some optimism.

The energy demands of India and China can be met by Russia and the Central Asians as well as by the SCO observer member state, Iran. To this end projects are being implemented, or are in the planning process, for energy routes through the region. China already has an agreed pipeline linking it to Kazakhstan and is in negotiation with Turkmenistan. However, as one example of how competition is hindering cooperation, Russia which is keen to gain advantage from Central Asian energy seeks to route Turkmen gas northwards through its territory at the expense of China.

The problem of security of energy supplies southwards to India and South Asia is more complex. Any pipeline from Central Asia would have to be routed through Afghanistan to be viable. The Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline (TAPI) is planned to take Turkmen natural gas along a 1,700 kilometre pipeline to Pakistan and India. The nascent project for this route which brings significant financial profit for Afghanistan and Pakistan will naturally remain stalled whilst the Afghan conflict continues. At a meeting in November 2006, to discuss the pipeline the Afghan foreign minister made the very specific point that the pipeline would strengthen regional cooperation if all countries involved agreed to its construction.

The proposed 2,720-kilometre pipeline from Iran to India via Pakistan, which is sometimes called the “peace pipeline”, is another example which holds more prospects of being realised in a shorter timeframe as it will not pass through Afghanistan. It is still subject to insecurity within Pakistan, and particularly Balochistan through which 760 kilometres of pipeline will pass. Also of regional note, the Russian energy company has made a bid to build the \$7bn pipeline. The paradox of these projects is that they have the potential for considerable economic benefits to all the countries involved. Still these same countries are unable to

realise the benefits due to ongoing insecurity. The central reason for this insecure environment is probably the Afghan conflict and so, with much to gain by its resolution, the incentive for the regional states towards achieving that resolution has arguably never been greater.

For Pakistan another project of major economic importance is the realisation of the full potential of Gwadar Port. Other countries too stand to benefit from the port's potential once the road links to Central Asia, India and Iran are fully operational. In the context of a realisable northern route this again depends on a stable environment in Afghanistan. There is a wider dimension to the project beyond the immediate region as a secure route has the potential to link the port to markets much further afield. And in this respect the European Union (EU) too has an interest; thus bringing another international organisation with 'soft power' potential into the grouping with the SCO and SAARC. There is an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for cooperation between the EU and SAARC to facilitate trade between member countries of the two organisations. But this has yet to develop into a more meaningful arrangement which might be a useful mechanism for conflict resolution in Afghanistan.

Talking at the SAARC summit this year President Karzai made the point that *".....With the reconstruction of our national highway system, for example, all Central Asian capitals will be less than 32 hours from the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, thereby, connecting Central Asia to South Asia and Far East to Middle East – a market of literally half of the world population and vast resources...[and] ... Afghanistan's membership in SAARC will also expedite North-South transit routes for nations beyond our immediate neighbourhoods..."*.

Although large-scale cooperative ventures such as pipeline projects are still far from reaching any meaningful stage in their development, Afghanistan's trade with the regional countries such as Iran, India, Pakistan, China and

Turkey has already increased significantly since 2001. Such an indicator of recovery gives some hope for the future prosperity and stability of the country leading to greater progress. Much of the progress has been made through bilateral agreements rather than multilateral cooperative arrangements. An exception is the Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan power trading project which President Karzai said “...underscores the virtues of regional economic linkages and I encourage further cooperation of this nature...”

The development of Afghanistan into a secure and stable state is imperative to enable more ambitious projects of benefit to the region and beyond. This however demands a more coordinated effort for development projects inside the country. Despite the insecurity which is too great to allow such activity in many provinces, there are some projects of note.

The Zaranj-Delaram link road, which is funded by India and is due to be completed by May 2008, will link Kandahar with the Iranian port of Chabahar. Once complete, the road will have the potential for a considerable expansion in trade to develop when security allows. For now the situation is far from stable and two hundred and fifty Indian Border Police are deployed to help Afghan security forces guard against attacks on workers. The \$84m Salma Dam project is another large-scale Indian-funded project in Herat province. It started before the Afghan civil war and has been re-started.

These projects are only two amongst many others; but they stand out for their scale and regional dimension and involvement. India with its growing economic power has obvious capacity in this area. But, when viewed through the prism of historical conflicts in the region, there may be those in Pakistan who see such Indian involvement in Afghanistan as being against the interests of Pakistan. However, this paper has argued that the scale of challenges of today, and the importance of Afghanistan to the region’s future demand that risks may have to be taken in putting such sentiments to

one side if the challenges are to be met. Political and conflict risk assessment in the twenty-first century is a necessary part of statehood in the globalised world where state boundaries have less significance than in the past.

Conclusion

It has been argued that in this region which includes the wider dimension of China, Russia, Iran and maybe others such as Turkey, Afghanistan is the undeniable nexus. In this position its stability is crucial to the successful and secure prosperity of all these countries in the future. It lies at the crossroads through which must pass the routes that will enable development, and is the transit territory for pipelines from Central Asia.

Afghanistan must develop so that stability can take root and in order to realise these regional possibilities. The forces which existed before the intervention in 2001 cannot be allowed to re-emerge. Terrorist training camps and unrestrained narco-trafficking as well as other threats are as much a concern to the countries of Asia as they are to the West. Drug addiction and non-state armed activity is widespread across this region, and the trans-national nature of threats demands a cooperative response. For Afghans non-traditional models of communism and Western democracy clash with culture and give rise to resistance which means other solutions have to be sought at a regional level.

If the West in the form of the US and its allies is unable to bring stability to Afghanistan, and if it is unacceptable for the country to return to its former state, it can be argued that there has to be greater and more unified involvement by the region with all its enormous potential. In the short term the US and the NATO presence has to be accepted as the force most likely to provide a form of security to at least a part of the country. Notwithstanding, the weaknesses of the NATO's position and the problems faced

by the organisation, it would appear that there is no other viable option at the moment.

Regional cooperative organisations such as the SAARC and the SCO with some involvement by the EU may provide a better model through which multi-lateral cooperation can develop to enable stability to be built up in Afghanistan. The two emerging economic powers, India and China, cannot be ignored for their future potential in sharing their wealth with those less prosperous countries in the region. India is already involved, and it may be hoped that China can increase its effort in Afghanistan. 'Soft power' initiatives, enabled by regional states, are more likely to succeed than solutions from the West. At the same time the West cannot be ignored as it has 'soft power' potential too and is also a target of the menace of drugs and terrorism that may once again find 'safe haven' in a future Afghanistan if more effort is not focused on the development of the country.

Another reason for cooperation which may be even greater than that needed to cope with the current threats in the context of Afghanistan is that of emerging threats. Whether or not these are related to traditional and transnational threats or climate change including catastrophies, there is a need for urgency in coordination, cooperation and contingency planning on a multilateral basis. Certainly this requires the acceptance of risk and moving beyond old enmities. That is the choice which is facing the region and wider international community.

NATO's Involvement in Afghanistan Crisis: Successes and Failures

Col Saffet Akkaya (Retd)

Introduction

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is accepted as the strongest system of collective defence established in 1949 as a mutual defence organization. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, considerable changes have taken place in the NATO concept reflective of the political will and military capabilities of member states. The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 necessitated a re-evaluation of NATO's purpose, nature and strategic tasks. It was based on the principle that the threat to the alliance was from out of alliance territory and new military capabilities were required to encounter that. In practice this ended up entailing a gradual and still ongoing expansion of NATO to Eastern Europe, as well as the extension of its activities to areas that had not formerly been NATO concerns, and expansion of NATO itself by including new member states. Since 11 September 2001 the member states have sought to create a "new" NATO which is capable of reaching beyond the European theatre and combat new

threats such as terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Afghanistan, accordingly, is the first “out-of-area” mission of NATO.

This paper will cover the anti-terror operations conducted by US-led and NATO-led coalition forces’ operations after 9/11 in Afghanistan; what challenges they face and what are the successes and deficiencies of NATO operations in Afghanistan.

Socio-economic situation in Central Asia

It will not be a comprehensive assessment to try to figure out the outcome of NATO existence and NATO operations in Afghanistan if the historical, political, economic and social backgrounds of Afghanistan and other Central Asian Republics of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are not understood.

Central Asian Republics have been under the reign of the Russian Empire since the mid-18th century and of the Soviet Union during the Soviet rule for over 70 years. Afghanistan was invaded by the Red Army in 1979 and experienced the severe outcomes of a very devastating war for nearly a decade until 1989. Because of the negative approach of the Soviet regime to the Muslim societies in these countries, the radical religious groups found a vacuum and a very appropriate atmosphere to arouse the people. Underground Islamic movements resurfaced in these countries and the Muslims of Central Asia found inspiration in the religious zeal of radical groups in Afghanistan, particularly the Mujahideen who fought against the Red Army during the invasion. In a short time, thousands of mosques were built in these countries and ranks of sects like Wahabism and Salafism which originated in Saudi Arabia and which favoured a more traditional way of Islamic understanding swelled. As a natural consequence, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Islamic teachings filled the vacuum to redefine the national identities of these people.

Hizb-ut Tahrir, Taliban and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan became the principal spearheads of radical Islamic movements in Central Asia, turning the region into an extension of the turmoil in Afghanistan. In parallel to the anti-terrorist campaigns in Central Asia, the policies of dominant powers in the area focused on the control of strategic resources and on arousing the people against American/Western ideas. Furthermore, economic depression, poverty and unemployment also promoted the forces of extremism. The living conditions of the people in these states have relatively worsened compared to the Soviet era and the unrest against authoritarian leaders has grown gradually.

Whatever may have been the influence of the radical Islamic movements on the people of Central Asia, recent events prove that they all are deeply affected by poor economic conditions, non-democratic governments, lack of human rights and policies of the major powers in the region.

Military operations

The military operations in Afghanistan had a dual track since the very beginning. Immediately after 9/11 terrorist attacks, in October 2001, “Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)” was launched as a multinational military operation to counter terrorism and oust Taliban and al-Qaeda from Afghanistan. OEF is under the command of US CENTCOM carrying out offensive tasks mainly in western Afghanistan. The headquarters of the operation is located in Bagram airbase as Combined Forces Command — Afghanistan (CFC-A). The legal basis for OEF came from two UN Security Council resolutions, and the self-defence-focused Article 5, which was invoked unanimously by members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. OEF operations led by United States quickly resulted in the collapse of the Taliban regime and contributed to gradually return a measure of security and stability to Afghanistan. This operation involved troops from over 20 nations,

including about 17,000 US forces and about 3,000 non-US troops. Since the very beginning of the operations, US and Coalition forces continue to engage Taliban remnants and other extremists. They work also in coordination with the Pakistani military to support security along the Afghan-Pakistan border.

Parallel with the establishment of OEF, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was created in December 2001 with UN Security Council Resolution 1386 which authorized the deployment of a multinational force in and around Kabul to help stabilize the country and create conditions for self-sustaining peace. ISAF was initially led by four NATO member countries, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Germany and the Netherlands, with NATO support. On 11 August, 2003, NATO took over the leadership of ISAF from the joint German-Dutch command of ISAF III. This underscores the long-term commitment of all NATO allies to the stability and security of the Afghan people. It also marks the alliance's contribution to the fight against terrorism, as bringing security and stability to Afghanistan and preventing it from becoming once again a breeding ground for international terrorism.

Since the beginning of ISAF missions in December 2001, it has been staffed and financed by different troop-contributing countries and four UN Security Council Resolutions have been issued concerning the responsibilities and amendments for ISAF missions. These are UNSCR - 1386, 1413, 1444 and 1510. Since 2003 ISAF is operated under the overall authority of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE).

ISAF Headquarters are located in Kabul. There are five Regional Commands (RC). These are: RC Center, RC North, RC West, RC South and RC East. Each regional command is under the authority of a lead nation and is composed of a Command and Control Headquarters and a Forward Support Base (FSB) that stands as the major logistical hub for the whole region. ISAF HQ liaises with

and assists in the work of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Afghan government and non-governmental organizations.

Afghanistan mission for NATO is a difficult one because combat operations must take place against Taliban insurgents while implementing socio-economic projects to reconstruct the country and improve the living conditions of the people. NATO's mission statement includes essential elements to stabilize and rebuild the country. These elements are: train the Afghan National Army, train the Afghan Police, establish an effective judiciary system, minimize the narcotic efforts, develop a market infrastructure and suppress Taliban forces throughout the country.

NATO engagements

NATO engagement in Afghanistan has a triple structure. First, under ISAF leadership, an international force of some 47,000 troops assists the Afghan government in extending and exercising its authority and influence across the country, creating conditions for stabilization and reconstruction.

Second, a Senior Civilian Representative (SCR), responsible for advancing the political-military aspects of the Alliance's commitment to the country, who works closely with ISAF, liaises with the Afghan government and international organizations including UNAMA, and the European Union (EU), and maintains contacts with neighbouring countries. NATO created the SCR position in Afghanistan in October 2003, with the aim of advancing the political-military aspects of the alliance's commitment in the country. Turkish Minister Hikmet Cetin was initially appointed to this post and was succeeded by a number of other diplomats. Ambassador Fernando Gentilini was due to take up the post in May 2008.

And third, a substantial programme of cooperation with Afghanistan, concentrating on defence reform, defence

institution-building and the military aspects of security sector reform. This programme complements ISAF's operational role and will help consolidate the gains achieved through ISAF's presence. It will concentrate on defence reform, defence institution-building and the military aspects of security sector reform, as well as on other areas, such as promoting interoperability between the forces of the Afghan National Army and NATO members.

In addition to the overall task of assisting the Afghan government in extending its authority across the country and creating a secure environment, ISAF also assists in the development of Afghan security forces and structures, including training the new Afghan National Army and National Police. Within this aim ISAF identifies reconstruction needs, such as the rehabilitation of schools and medical facilities, restoring water supplies and providing support for other civil-military projects. On the other hand, it supports the Afghan government in disarming illegally armed groups, provides intelligence for counter-narcotics operations and supports an efficient public information campaign.

Difficulties for NATO operations

ISAF has been facing formidable obstacles from day one. Some of these include shoring up a weak government in Kabul, using military capabilities in a distant country with rugged terrain, and rebuilding a country devastated by war and troubled by narcotics trade.

On the other hand, although all NATO member states agree on ISAF's mission, they have differed since the very beginning on how to accomplish it. Some members do not want their forces to engage in combat operations and none of them wants to engage directly in destruction of poppy fields in order to counter the drug trade.

Some member states commit their forces to NATO operations, and then impose restrictions as "national caveats"

on tasks those forces may undertake. These restrictions, for example, may prohibit forces from engaging in combat operations or from patrolling at night due to lack of night-vision equipment. In addition to national caveats, some governments do not permit their forces to be transferred to other parts of Afghanistan.

The United States, Canada, Britain, and the Netherlands have forces in southern and eastern Afghanistan and have appealed to other governments to release combat forces to assist them in moments of danger. As the French government reduced its caveats to allow its forces elsewhere to come to the assistance of other NATO forces, Turkey in contrast refused to allow its forces to be used in combat missions. Some other NATO members follow other types of caveats at different levels that restrict use of their forces under ISAF command, and these caveats create a challenge for NATO operations. At the alliance summit in Riga, Latvia, in November 2006, NATO leaders sought to reduce the caveats in Afghanistan.

ISAF mission and structure since 2005

Since the very beginning of the operation, ISAF has proceeded in stages to stabilize the country. In Stage One between 2003-2004, ISAF took control of Kabul and northern Afghanistan. In Stage Two in May 2005, ISAF moved into western Afghanistan.

Stage Three was a challenge for NATO operations because the Taliban originated in south in Qandahar province and they retain their most active network there. Poppy farming is widespread in the south, particularly in Helmand and Uruzgan provinces. NATO members confronted four major issues when attempting to create a coherent force for Stage Three. These major challenges were: writing a mission statement, raising troops to accomplish the mission, agreeing upon the treatment of prisoners and creating a command structure. In July 2006

ISAF moved to south and since October 2006, as a result of Stage Four, ISAF now assumes responsibility for the whole country.

From fall 2005 through early 2006, the United States tried to merge the functions of ISAF and OEF in order to assume counter-insurgency and anti-terror responsibilities in the southern and eastern parts of the country. Some of the member states were reluctant to clash with the Taliban and warlords and did not agree to this demand contending that ISAF and OEF operations were different according to UN resolutions. ISAF was called for stabilization measures only whereas OEF was meant for combat missions. Finally in December 2005, the allies announced a mission statement pledging to extend the authority of the Afghan government primarily through establishment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). They committed themselves also to train Afghan army and police and to support counter-narcotics efforts of the government.

After crystallizing a more rigid mission statement, the next step was to task more effective troops to carry out combat operations against Taliban groups and to coordinate ISAF and OEF operations. NATO member states' discussions focused on establishing a more robust command structure that will merge ISAF and OEF operations and assume more responsibilities for combat tasks. As mentioned earlier, many allies first resisted the idea because of the different nature of the two bodies and the differing national agendas of the participating countries. Britain, Germany and France were three principal allies opposed to merger of the commands. They wished to preserve ISAF as a stabilization mission. But finally the command of ISAF and OEF was merged under one head, a US general, responsible to conduct both operations. At the moment, there are two different HQs under one commander. What the US wants is to merge both operations under NATO responsibility in the future.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)

The PRTs are small teams of civilian and military personnel working in the provinces to help local authorities provide security and assist them in reconstruction work. They have the following objectives:

- Strengthening and extending the authority of the Central Government,
- Assisting in establishing stability and security,
- Enabling reconstruction and facilitating the coordination and division of labour between civilian and military actors,
- Providing professional expertise and facilitating the work of NGOs and other actors by improving the security situation.

NATO officials describe PRTs as the leading edge of the allies' effort to stabilize the country. It is believed that NATO's assistance to the government in controlling the narcotics trade, disarming militias, reducing corruption, and building an economic infrastructure is the essence of the effort to bring stability to the country. The purpose of the PRTs is identified as to extend the authority of the central government into the countryside, provide security, and undertake projects to boost the national economy.

There is no established model for PRTs but in general they are a composition of soldiers, civil affairs officers, representatives of government agencies focusing on reconstruction and some Afghan government personnel. In many parts of Afghanistan, the PRT has been an innovative and effective model for stabilization efforts. The combination of civil and military personnel facilitates a shared sense of purpose, security, and development among post-conflict stakeholders. The civilians involved are typically engineers, mechanics and other specialists.

However, the model is vulnerable to differing national styles: OEF and ISAF-led PRTs function very differently, particularly with regard to the civil-military

balance. Initially, from December 2002, PRTs operated under the US-led coalition. However, ISAF has gradually taken responsibility for a growing number of PRTs. At present NATO controls 26 PRTs all over the country. One main issue about PRTs is the control of the funds provided by the member states. This is a sensitive point in the context of corruption in government. To be successful, PRTs require certain levels of political stability, infrastructure and support from NGOs and other civic actors, in order to build bridges with local communities and to deliver development projects effectively.

Since 2001, US\$26.8 billion have been made available to Afghanistan in the name of reconstruction and development, including \$10.5 billion pledged at the London Conference in 2006. PRTs have brought about some improvements in the sectors of health, economy, private sector investments, infrastructure, security, refugees, women, schools and the media. Currently the status of PRT projects in the various regional command areas is somewhat like this:

In Regional Command-Centre (RC-C) since 2002, about \$17 million have been spent on more than 2,000 CIMIC and infrastructure projects.

In Regional Command-East (RC-E) since 2002, over \$500 million have been spent for more than 15,000 PRT and infrastructure projects.

In Regional Command-North (RC-N) since 2002, about \$40 million have been spent on more than 2,000 PRT and infrastructure projects.

In Regional Command-South (RC-S) since 2002, about \$177 million have been spent for more than 45,00 PRT and infrastructure projects.

In Regional Command-West (RC-W) since 2002, about \$164 million have been spent on more than 4,600 PRT and infrastructure projects.

Counter-narcotics operations

Afghanistan supplied 92 per cent of the world opium as of 2006. The crop is a major factor in the economic life and stability of the country, and some estimates place it at 40 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is clear that a small load of opium can yield a high financial return to the farmers but this trade has a corrosive impact on Afghan society. Drug trade is contributing to endemic corruption at all levels of government and undercuts the public confidence. A dangerous link exists between drugs, insurgents and warlords who derive funds from cultivation and trafficking.

The opium poppy farmers are heavily concentrated in the southern part of the country and poppy is their only source of income. Unless a substitute source of income is provided to the farmer he would resist any effort to destroy his poppy fields. Forcible destruction of poppy crops fuels the insurgency movement in the country. The other difficulty is that no substitute crop can compete with poppies in terms of hard cash yields. The income from a hectare of poppies can reach \$4600 a year, while wheat, one of the suggested substitute crops, can bring only \$390. Orchards can bring more money but they need years to develop.

On the other hand, the future of Afghanistan's poppy production and the ISAF poppy operations is too complicated to predict. The NATO forces do not actively take part in destroying poppy fields but provide training, intelligence and logistics to the national army units and police to destroy opium labs and fields. But their operations to destroy poppy fields are too random to be effective and the government does not take decisive actions to end the warlords' involvement in narcotics trade. Moreover, the government lacks the law enforcement tools, including a well functioning judicial system, to combat the narcotics trade successfully. ISAF and the Karzai government are working on a long-term solution to the problem that will take

years to see any effective results. NATO is assisting in the building of an Afghan law enforcement infrastructure to dismantle the opium industry. To this end, ISAF is training a special narcotics police force and developing a professional judiciary which is absent in Afghanistan; but these projects may require years to accomplish.

The Afghanistan compact

The London Conference on Afghanistan (31 January to 1 February 2006) was a historic milestone for the Afghan people and the international community. The compact sets out an ambitious programme for Afghan development over the next five years. The conference marks a new phase of international support for Afghanistan, in which Afghanistan sets its reconstruction and development priorities and international partners provide resources and support. The government of Afghanistan, with the support of its international partners, is committing itself to specific and achievable goals in security, governance, economic and social development, and counter-narcotics offensives.

The Afghanistan Compact identifies three critical and interdependent areas, or pillars of activity for the five years from the adoption of the Compact. These are (1) security and governance, (2) rule of law and human rights, and (3) economic and social development. Security remains the fundamental prerequisite for achieving stability and development in the country, and it is envisaged that security cannot be provided by military means alone. It requires good governance, justice and the rule of law, reinforced by reconstruction and development. In this respect, NATO-led ISAF, the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom will continue to provide strong support to the Afghan government.

From the point of governance, rule of law and human rights, democratic governance and the protection of human rights constitute the cornerstone of sustainable political progress in Afghanistan. Reforming the justice system is

seen as a priority for the Afghan government and the international community. They reaffirm their commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights provided in the Afghan Constitution. For economic and social development, the government will pursue sustainable economic growth with the aim of reducing hunger, poverty and unemployment. Public investments will be structured around the six sectors of economic and social development. These are infrastructure and natural resources, education, health, agriculture and rural development, social protection and economic governance and private sector development.

A vital element of the Afghanistan Compact is counter-narcotic efforts. This issue poses a threat to national, regional and international security as well as the development of the country. The aim is to achieve a sustained reduction in the production and trafficking of narcotics leading to complete elimination. To create alternative economic means for farmers and labourers is vital for rural development.

Within the general principles mentioned above, the Afghan Government, with the support of the international community, is committed to achieving the benchmarks in accordance with specified timelines for a five-year period. NATO's role is a key part of the Afghanistan Compact, a five-year plan between the government of Afghanistan and the international community, which sets goals relating to the security, governance and economic development of the country.

Concluding remarks

So far NATO operations have maintained a basic unity of purpose in Afghanistan in order to stabilize the country and to prevent the return of a terrorist state. ISAF has been a key player in Afghanistan that may be helpful in building a state that is relatively stable, no longer a source of

international terrorism and one that attempts to diminish the narcotics trade which is a threat to European societies.

Although NATO member states agree on their overall mission to stabilize the country they often differ on the means to reach this objective and on the number of the forces to be made available. NATO member states have faced some difficulties such as maintaining funds necessary to rebuild Afghanistan, or assigning combat units under ISAF command in order to conduct combat operations against insurgents. On the other hand, some of the PRTs that are thought to play a crucial role in gaining the confidence of the Afghan people are not able to accomplish their tasks and contribute to the overall aim of stabilizing the country. Some PRTs are accomplishing vital projects that bring relief to the daily life of the people, but some others are believed to be making just a show for the satisfaction of the alliance members.

The command structure is another challenge for future ISAF operations. While the allies agree on a command structure linking OEF and ISAF, some observers believe that national commands will preserve the authority to make final decisions about use of their forces. Controlling poppy fields and opium labs is another vital problem that is waiting for feasible solutions. It does not seem acceptable to replace poppy fields with other agricultural crops even as Afghanistan's share in opium production grows each year. NATO member states do not want to take an active role in cutting back the area under poppy fields while the Afghan government lacks the power and the plan to do that systematically.

In the fight against Taliban and al-Qaeda and war on terrorism as a general rule, it is the confidence of the people that is going to play the most crucial role for the success of the whole mission. The side that will gain the confidence of the public will have the advantage over the other side. Actually, military operations and campaigns conducted since 9/11 never encountered any strong resistance from Taliban,

al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups in Afghanistan. But it seems that these elements had never lost the support and sympathy of the people in these areas. In fact they started to get stronger and in the past two years have been able to launch more severe and fatal attacks against US and other coalition forces.

It is not therefore easy to assess the prospects of the ISAF and OEF operations in the near future. It does not seem likely that the fight against terrorism from a general perspective can develop a positive picture in Afghanistan. The future of NATO operations in Afghanistan is also related to the security situation in Iraq. The abovementioned deficiencies in military, economic and administrative aspects of the operations need to be removed if failure in Afghanistan, which will not only impact greatly on the fight against terrorism but also on the future of NATO missions, is to be avoided.

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Tribal Areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan: Interconnectivity and Spillover Effects

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Introduction

Afghanistan particularly its area south of the Hindukush range and Pakistan's Tribal Areas, North-West Frontier Province and northern part of Baluchistan, collectively constituting the Pushtun majority land lying between the Hindukush range and the Indus River, have remained a focal point for historians as well as for those trying to extend their imperial borders. These extensions have been either to the south or east as in the case of earlier conquerors from Central Asia and the USSR in recent times or to the west or north as by the Imperial British in the 19th and 20th centuries. Dominant civilisations always expand in search for security, stability of their frontiers and in pursuit of their economic and commercial interests. Such great movements are well known in history; they continue until they either overrun their strength as in the case of the USSR in Afghanistan, or until they find a formidable wall in the

form of an equally stable civilisation, or by reaching a natural frontier such as a great mountain range, desert or sea.

The great mountain range of Hindukush passing through Afghanistan from north-east to south-west just north of Kabul is just one such frontier. It separates Central Asia from South Asia. The geo-strategic location of this area sometimes gives it the status of a 'buffer state' and sometimes it becomes a bone of contention between rival powers. The Pakistani tribal belt from Baluchistan in the south to Chitral in the north is strategically so located that the presence of unsurpassable Pamir knot, the Karakorums in the north and the inhospitable Iranian Desert and the Arabian Sea in the south makes it the only gateway for invasions of the subcontinent and vice versa.

The Aryans, the Persians, the Greeks, the Kushans, the Huns, the Mongols, the Mughals, the Durrani, the Sikhs and the colonial British had to pass through this area for their stakes in the perpetual "Great Game" played on the vast and majestic panorama of Central Asia stretching from the mighty Indus to the Kazakh Steppe beyond Kizilkum Desert. The people in the plains of the subcontinent had been keen observers of the tremors, waves and vibrations in this area. The constant exposure of the area to foreign invasions, trade caravans and political turmoil brought about by various dynasties throughout history in this region has influenced its society in every sphere of life. It has interlinked the fates of all the people inhabiting it, irrespective of the location of national boundaries drawn or redrawn at any given period by predominant powers of the time.

The continued presence of the US-led forces in Afghanistan and their failure to prevent the resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan and the spreading of this menace to the Tribal Areas of Pakistan must be seen with this historical and geographical perspective in mind. History seems to be repeating itself. The world, with modern nation-state concept sees Pakistan and Afghanistan as two different states and also appreciates the role played by Pakistan as a frontline

state in this war on terror. Yet they fail to understand the reason for interference in Afghanistan from Pakistan's Tribal Areas because they fail to understand the historical interconnectivity between these areas, and Afghanistan overarching the modern national boundaries. The reorganisation of Pakistani Taliban and some other extremist elements in the tribal areas of Pakistan are not only posing a threat to the US-led forces in Afghanistan but also endangering the Federation of Pakistan with further implications for peace and security of South-Asia and South-East Asia. It is therefore absolutely essential to understand the interconnectivity between Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan and the spillover effects on either side.

Interconnectivity: A historical perspective

The history of this area can be traced back almost to the early period of recorded history. It was around 1600 BC that the Aryans are stated to have traversed the passes in the Tribal Areas to settle down in the Plains of South Asia. The Persians followed them in and around 550 BC. Cyrus the Great made the area into a province of the then Persian Empire. In 327 BC Alexander the Great leading his Macedonian army marched into what the colonial British later named North-West Frontier via Nawa Pass in Bajaur Agency. He is stated to have visited almost the entire Yousufzai belt. The tide of armies marching from the east stopped with the rise of Mauryans in India.

Ashoka was the first to advance from the east. He crossed into the area west of the Indus, and subjugated the Peshawar Valley. Gandhara civilization owes its origin to the period coinciding with 323 BC. Kanishka, the Kushan King, dominated not only Gandhara — the Peshawar Valley — but Afghanistan also. The famous Buddhist stupas and monasteries were built during his reign. The downfall of the Kushan dynasty around 225 AD provided yet another opportunity for the invaders.

The famous among the new hordes of invaders were the White Huns in the 5th century AD. This period saw the downfall of Buddhism and devastation of the Gandhara civilization. Rajput kings — Jaipal and Anand Pal — were probably the strongest Hindu rulers who had some control over Afghanistan and what is today known as NWFP. Mahmood Ghaznavi started the fresh wave of invaders from Central Asia in 1000 AD, and established Afghan domination over the subcontinent which lasted for almost 500 years. The Mongols under Genghis Khan were next to venture into this area in 1220 AD in pursuit of Jalaluddin Shah of Khwarizm. The Mughals — the descendents of Mongols — came into contact with today's FATA-PATA tribes in the early 16th century. The Mughal Empire saw its glory until the end of Aurangzeb Alamgir's era in 1707.

The invasion of India by Nadir Shah and his murder on his return journey culminated in a sovereign proclamation by Ahmad Shah Abdali which laid the foundation of the Durrani Dynasty in 1749. The downfall of the Durrani owing to their family feuds provided an opportunity to Ranjeet Singh, the governor of the then Punjab, to declare independence in 1834. He snatched Peshawar from Durrani. In 1836 the Sikhs built Fatehgarh at Jamrud.

The westward march of the Sikhs was followed by a more vigorous, determined and farsighted imperial power, the British. The Sikhs fought their war. As a matter of fact the Sikhs were made, for no rhyme or season, to take up arms against the Afghan rulers. It proved fatal both for the Sikhs as well as the Afghans. The period between 1825 and 1834 saw the Sikhs rising to their zenith while the period from 1834 to 1846 saw the hostilities between the Sikhs and Afghans gradually progressing towards their downfall. In 1849 the British annexed Punjab and with this annexation the East India Company established its direct rule on what they later came to call the North-West Frontier and indirect administration over the Tribal Areas.

The advent of the 19th century saw two imperial powers — Czarist Russia and colonial British — involved in a race of expansion. The Russians were expanding eastwards with a horrific speed of 25 sq. km per day while the imperial British were determined to match the onslaught with a formidable defence as far away as possible from the plains of Punjab and coastal area of Sind and Baluchistan.

The struggle was evident in every step taken by the British with regard to the Frontier and the Tribal Areas. The Anglo-Afghan wars were fought to this end. The Political Agencies and Tribal Areas' specific system of administration was evolved for the same purpose. Afghanistan was carved out as a buffer state and an area falling within the exclusive sphere of influence of British and to the exclusion of the Russians in particular. The "Forward Policy", "The close Border Policy" and above all the "Policy of Masterly Inactivity" were some of the masterpieces produced by the tacticians engaged in the "Great Game."

The year 1839 saw the devastating effects of colonial engagement with the Frontier tribes. It was for the first time in the history of this area that a regular army with all its imperial grandeur marched towards Afghanistan. The tribes rightly saw this as a permanent threat to their independence which they had retained throughout recorded history. The tribes consistently insisted on retaining their freedom while the imperial British were worried about the approaching danger of Russian influence. The struggle concluded in evolution of the existing tribal system.

In 1947 with the creation of Pakistan all the tribes up to the Durand Line and the chiefs of the four princely states of NWF — Dir, Swat, Chitral and Amb — decided to join Pakistan of their own free will.

Interconnectivity: A geo-socio perspective

Afghanistan's eastern and southern border with Pakistan lies astride difficult mountain ranges also known as

Koh-i-Sufaid and Koh-i-Sulaiman, considered as offshoots of the Hindukush, except for a small part in Baluchistan which is semi-desert. This border, also called the Durand Line, was agreed upon between Sir Mortimer Durand and Amir Abdul Rehman of Afghanistan in 1893 after lengthy discussions. This agreement gave the control of all important passes in the Tribal Areas to the British rulers of the subcontinent at that time and to Pakistan subsequently as successor state to the British rule.

The line or more precisely the international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan makes a lot of military sense but remains porous owing to the fact that it divides the same ethnic society found on both sides of the border. Although there are many international borders that divide ethnic communities, yet over a period of time the communities get used to it and it acquires permanency in the psyche of the people too. However, in this case the people in the Tribal Areas still live as tribes and have not reached that stage of evolution where individual economic interests disintegrate a tribal society into individual family groups and so on. Thus here the same tribes hold sway over both sides of the international border, thereby reducing its comparative sanctity in the eyes of the local populace.

Pakistan has a 2430-km-long border with Afghanistan, out of which half is located in Baluchistan and the other half in NWFP. The area along the border in the NWFP is a proper tribal area and is referred to as FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) whereas the area in Baluchistan although inhabited by tribes is no longer a classical tribal area except for the Marri and Bugti areas which do not lie on the border with Afghanistan but do affect the Bolan Pass to an extent. Historically, Major Sandeman who subdued most of the tribal area of Baluchistan followed a different model of administration there than that in NWFP, as it was easy to negotiate with these powerful sardars. At that time and after the 1947 partition four agencies, i.e. Dera Bugti, Kohlu, Chaghai, and Zhob, had been created as

provincially administered tribal areas. The area almost south of Lak Pass consisted of Kalat, Kharan, Lasbella and Makran states and the area along the Bolan Pass and the area north of Bolan was referred to as British Baluchistan. In 1982 owing to the lapse of an ordinance these agencies have ceased to exist, converted into districts. The poor law and order situation in these districts explains the lack of any proper mechanism to replace the previous system.

However, the area north of the Gomal River has a different type of tribal community. Here each tribe as a well-knit community lives on its own without any extraneous pressure. These tribes put together have over a period of time developed a distinct socio-judicial code of life which regulates their day-to-day affairs including their intertribal and intratribal matters. As said earlier, the Pushtuns or Pukhtuns from the Indus to the Hindukush Range are not only the same people but also share the same religious, sociological and cultural values. The problem is further accentuated by the presence of the same tribes straddling across the present Pak-Afghan international border. Since they have very close affinities within their tribes, they would like to attend marriage and funeral ceremonies and discuss their internal tribal affairs. Therefore this aspect coupled with the extreme mountainous terrain makes this border difficult to be sealed. In Baluchistan the main Pushtun tribes living astride the border, besides some Baluch tribes in extreme south, are Mohammadkhels, Nurzais, Achakzais, Kakars, and a mixture of Mandokhels, Kharotis, Nasirs, and Sulimankhels, spread out right up to the River Gomal. In NWFP the Ahmadzai Wazirs of South Waziristan Agency and Uthmanzai Wazirs with Gurbuz of North Waziristan Agency, Muqbals, Jajjis and Mangals of Kurrum Agency, Shinwaris of Khyber Agency, Kodakhels and Khugakhels besides Musakhels, Isakhels and Safis of Mohmand Agency and Mamunds and Salarzais of Bajaur Agency are major tribes living along both sides of the border. They are also called 'Assured Tribes.' So besides the overarching

connections that Pushtuns of NWFP and Baluchistan have with the Pushtuns in Afghanistan, these 'Assured Tribes' straddling the border provide an adhesive element in this whole process of connectivity. However, in spite of this feeling of 'oneness' the tribes living on both sides of the border fully respect the international border between the two countries and will not allow one to encroach upon the territory of another. Over a period of time the people on the Afghan side of the border would like to call themselves 'Afghans' and the people on the Pakistani side of the border would call themselves 'Pushtuns' or 'Pukhtuns'. After all the term 'Afghan' is a geographical term where Pushtuns (42% of Afghanistan population), Tajiks (27%), Uzbeks (9%), Hazaras (9%) Turkomans (3%) and others (10%) would like to call themselves Afghans irrespective of their ethnicity.

In the pre-partition period the base of power was either Kabul or Delhi; therefore this tribal area acted as a buffer between these competing powers. The tribals exacted remuneration from anyone who passed through their areas. This arrangement existed right from the time of Ahmed Shah Abdali, the founder of the first Afghan dynasty, whose rule extended right up to the River Indus. After the break-up of this dynasty, the Sikhs entered the scene but they did not work out any sort of administration even in the settled area of what is today known as NWFP. They only reached the lower reaches of mountains adjoining the tribal area in the NWFP. Even in the NWFP they were obeyed in the immediate vicinity of their cantonments. In 1846 following the Sikhs' defeat, the Imperial British entered today's NWFP. After organising their administration in the settled areas, they worked out a number of agreements with the tribes to ensure safe passage to Afghanistan in pursuit of their imperial designs. The present system of administration is the legacy of those arrangements. This system existed since the days of Ahmad Shah Abdali or even before but it was codified and formalised in the form of the Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR) by the British.

This area is now called the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and lies in NWFP. FATA consists of seven “tribal agencies” and six “frontier regions.” These agencies are Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan and South Waziristan agencies. The six “frontier regions” (FRs) are Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki, Tank, and D.I.Khan. FATA has an area of 27,220 sq.km (3.4 per cent of Pakistan’s total land area) and a population of 3.138 million as per 1998 census but is otherwise estimated up to 10 million. In NWFP the erstwhile states of Dir, Swat, Chitral and Amb were originally declared PATA (Provincially Administrated Tribal Areas) but have subsequently been declared as districts. Some areas of Kohistan and Kala Dhaka are still provincially administered tribal areas (PATA).

It can be seen that the Imperial British besides considering Afghanistan as a buffer state in their grandiose design, considered the tribal area as a further buffer between Afghanistan and the subcontinent. The tribes continued to exert pressure both on the rulers in Afghanistan and rulers in the subcontinent. As said earlier, at that time the power base either used to be Kabul or Delhi and great armies always oscillated between the Khyber Pass and Bolan Pass but the tribes remained fiercely independent and exacted their price from any invader and took full advantage of their geographical location. There are certain lessons which can be deduced from the geo-historical perspective of this area summarised as below:

The Hindukush range is a formidable obstacle dividing Central Asia from South Asia but can be bypassed in the vicinity of Herat. The British ‘forward policy’ envisaged occupation of this range with listening posts close to the Oxus River and a strong presence at Herat. The prohibitive cost of maintaining law and order in the present-day Afghanistan prevented adoption of this course.

The area now forming Afghanistan and North-West Frontier had seen perhaps more invasions than any other

region in Asia, or indeed the world. The people living here are used to struggles, movements and wars. They do have the stamina to bear with adversity and never hesitate to engage in a dialogue even during active hostilities.

The tribal area people have over centuries evolved a code of life, Pukhtoonwali, which is embodied in their social norms and embedded in their psyche. This is also called Rewaj.

The tribals have occasionally accepted loose and irregular controls in lieu of matching remunerations in the form of subsidies, allowances, concessions and favours. These give-and-take agreements were always hammered out for securing a right of way either for marching armies or trading caravans. The phenomenon has given them the perfect art of striking favourable deals even in most unfavourable circumstances.

Political relationship with the tribes has always been maintained by the outsiders through the hierarchy of tribal chiefs/elders known as *maliks* or *sufaid reesh* or *mashar* in common parlance. This relationship was comprehensively formalized and institutionalized during the British era. The systemic tools, institutional mechanisms, orbit and axis dynamics, safety valves and reflex action modalities enshrined in the system speak of the effort put into shaping it up.

The people of the Tribal Areas have unanimously and out of their own free initiative and as a result of their collective will decide and expressed their loyalty and allegiance to Pakistan in an open Jirga. This unconditional allegiance declared in 1947 signified their pacification with the emergence of independence and their desire to hitch their destinies to Pakistan.

Overall review of present situation

The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan was not only a misadventure it also signified their crossing the

tacitly understood limit of the two competing superpowers' areas of influence. Soon after the Afghans of all ethnic groups in their true Afghan character united against this foreign aggression and started waging a resistance.

This was further supplemented by another important factor, i.e. Islam. The ruler in Pakistan at the time, General Zia-ul-Haq, was himself religious minded; therefore the struggle started taking the shape of jihad. With the active and material support of the United States of America this jihadi culture was fully promoted without considering its consequences for Pakistan, the region and the world at large. All Muslims with extremist ideas from the Middle East and Africa moved in to help in this jihad with both material and physical support. These elements used Pakistan as a conduit for going in and out of Afghanistan. Pakistan remained oblivious to the penetration of its society by these elements. Finally, the Soviets were forced to withdraw from Afghanistan. This misadventure also acted as the last straw on the proverbial camel's back and the Soviet Union disintegrated resulting in the emergence of the five independent Central Asian republics to the north of Afghanistan.

The USA after having achieved its objectives of disintegrating the USSR simply walked away and left Pakistan to sort out the mess created in that country. A French philosopher while analysing revolutions broadly talks of three distinct phases of any revolution. Firstly is the phase of motivating and mobilising the masses for the cause. The second phase is the actual resistance which goes about in throwing away the existing system while the third phase of any revolution consists in demobilising the people by taking away their weapons, sending them back into their schools and work places and introducing the new system for which the revolution has been basically waged. This third phase is the most important and delicate one, and is the actual test of leadership of those who lead the revolution. An example of this is the Iranian revolution, where this third crucial stage

was helped by the Iraqi attack on Iran. This war helped the Iranian revolutionary leadership to demobilise the people and create new state institutions based on the doctrine for which the revolution had been started.

Historically, in Afghanistan people of all ethnic groups get united in the face of any foreign interventionist force but their unity melts away as soon as the invader departs. This is what exactly happened in Afghanistan and it was far beyond the capacity of Pakistan to create unity there. The government of Pakistan gave up after initial efforts. While remaining oblivious to the development in the post-Soviet withdrawal of Afghanistan, the government failed to correctly appreciate the impact of the jihadi culture on society in Pakistan in particular and on the region in general. Subsequently, as the people of Afghanistan became fed up with local warlordism, a movement in the shape of Taliban took over.

The religious elements in NWFP and Baluchistan provided active support to the Taliban. The Government of Pakistan and Saudi Arab also assisted them actively in spite of objections from western powers and Soviet Union. They hoped to moderate the extremist policies of Taliban but failed. Taliban on the other hand after consolidating their power started exhibiting more extremist tendencies and Afghanistan started becoming a core state for all Islamic extremist elements like Harkat-ul-Ansar, Lashkar-e-Jhangwi, al-Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), etc. Taliban forces committed great atrocities on ethnic minorities in the north which brought them into direct confrontation with Iran and sent tremors into Russia regarding security of Central Asian republics. Iran, besides mobilising its forces on Afghanistan's border, put an air bridge in place to support the Northern Alliance in opposing the Taliban. Russia Military supplied military hardware and money and India also started actively supporting the Northern Alliance. The Taliban continued supporting Osama bin Laden thereby losing Saudi backing and becoming a

pariah in the international community owing to their policies which violated all international norms.

Then came the tragedy of 9/11 which brought the American wrath on Muslims all over the world. The US attacked Afghanistan with full support of the United Nations. The complications created by the revival of the obscurant jihadi concept in this region and its effects on Pakistan are really telling. And although all the major players like the Americans, Russians, Iranians and the Indians would like to get their respective advantages out of the situation in Afghanistan, Pakistan besides becoming the worst victim in this war on terrorism is the only country being blamed for not doing enough.

The deteriorating law and order situation in Pakistan, the creeping Talibanisation in NWFP and Baluchistan and the suicide attacks may, if the government fails to assert control, lead the country into a civil war.

In fact the main reason for the fallout of the Afghan war affecting Pakistan is that the US-led coalition attacked Afghanistan on 7 October 2001 without committing adequate ground forces to contain the adverse effects of its air assault on that country. Pakistan sensing the problem had moved its army into the tribal areas for the first time since its inception to contain this fallout. However, some foreign elements in spite of these precautions did cross the border and found safe refuge in the area of Ahmadzai Wazirs in South Waziristan. The government of Pakistan became aware of this problem in late 2002 and employed political strategy to deal with the problem by seeking tribal assistance along with use of threat of force. After prolonged discussions through jirgas and *Lashkarkashis* by local tribesmen, the government resorted to use of force in 2004, first by the Frontier Corps and then by the army including the air force, in a surgical manner with the consent and help of the tribes. As a result of these military operations guided sensibly by the political administration the government of Pakistan was able to drive out the intruding elements out of the tribal area and

established complete writ of the state in South Waziristan by the end of 2004.

It was at this point of time that the success went into the heads of various agencies of the government and they started acting independently of the political administration in order to gain credit for the success of the operations. They not only engaged themselves in concluding agreements with militants who had been driven out of the Agency but also facilitated their return on very loose terms and then went into a wholesale military operation in North Waziristan without involving the political administration, thereby causing huge collateral damage. Before this the governor along with his team who had displayed consternation over the sidelining of the political administration had been replaced with another team having no knowledge of the tribal area and its dynamics. The wholesale military operation in North Waziristan causing collateral damage resulted in a complete revolt in the North and South Waziristan Agencies. The governor and his team were changed again. The new governor, although belonging to the tribal area, could not afford to have tougher stance since it would risk his kith and kin residing in the tribal area, contrived the ill-advised North Waziristan Agreement. This agreement gave complete freedom to the militants to reorganise and recoup themselves and start challenging the writ of the government in the settled areas also. The governor was changed once again. The militants extended their activities right into the heart of Pakistan from Peshawar through Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi.

The government policy dealing with the Tribal Areas is perceived as being dictated by the US and remains hugely unpopular. The federal government caught up in the search for legitimacy — the ruler being from the army — made all sorts of compromises with the politico-religious parties which generally remained sympathetic to the cause of Talibanisation. The menace therefore spread not only to other tribal agencies but also to the settled areas. The

militants being encouraged by the lack of any comprehensive strategy in dealing with the extremists in the tribal areas, started targeting sensitive installations and personalities in order to terrorise all concerned into submission. A major political leader and two-time prime minister Benazir Bhutto, was assassinated, a three-star general was killed, and the interior minister twice escaped being killed. Sensitive installations of ISI and Special Operation Task Force were targeted with accuracy besides numerous senior police officer who were killed mercilessly.

It appears that while the terrorists advanced their campaign under a carefully planned strategy, the government remained embroiled first in its legitimacy battle and then in the general elections. The people fed up with the government voted in favour of parties having a clear anti-terrorism stance. After the elections an uneasy truce prevails. However, there are reports that al-Qaeda in great numbers has moved into the tribal areas. It is not very clear whether their next moves would be in Afghanistan or in Pakistan. Meanwhile Talibanisation is taking roots in all tribal agencies where they openly execute the so-called kidnappers and thieves while the government remains a silent spectator.

Having briefly looked at the prevalent situation it is important to see what implications it has for Afghanistan, for Pakistan and for the Tribal Areas.

Implications for Afghanistan

The people in Afghanistan particularly in the south of the Hindukush range, the people of the tribal areas, North-West Frontier Province and northern part of Baluchistan are so interlinked geographically, sociologically, ethnologically and culturally that the situation in one side definitely affects the other. As stated above this particular stock of people have always remained fiercely independent and have always reacted very strongly to any foreign occupation. As long as the US-led forces remain in Afghanistan, there will be a

certain amount of reaction not only in Afghanistan but also in this part of Pakistan. The government of Pakistan with the help of the US used these interlinkages against Soviet occupation to their advantage but now Islamabad finds it difficult to fight this natural phenomenon. Besides this the government of Pakistan with the present system of administration in the Tribal Areas finds it difficult to discharge its international obligations. The borderland terrain also is so difficult that it is almost impossible to stop movements across this border.

The present situation in FATA therefore definitely presents a threat to the US-led forces in Afghanistan and the government of Afghanistan. However, it will be an overstatement to say that all problems in Afghanistan are owing to the situation in the Tribal Areas and will amount to a 'paradigm disorientation'. In fact the reverse might be a more accurate and true description. The interference from FATA amounts to about 5-10 per cent addition to the complex situation in Afghanistan.

Implications for Tribal Areas of Pakistan

The tribal people are very proud Pakistanis but are caught up between their love for Pakistan and the situation in Afghanistan. They supported and harboured foreigners and extremists out of fear or greed or religious feelings. However, once these extremists took firm control over their society, they committed great atrocities against the tribal people by killing their Maliks and religious leaders who opposed their exploitation of religion besides innocent people by dubbing them as spies of Pakistan, Afghanistan and/or the US. Today these extremist elements like any vigilante group proceed to get hold of anyone, try them within ten minutes in front of a whole community and execute them. This is to terrorise the common tribesmen into complete submission. They physically impose archaic codes, like wearing of caps and growing of beards. Many criminal

groups have joined in for kidnapping people for ransom and hijacking vehicles. If anyone from the Taliban gets killed in any crossfire, it is promptly revenged. Many respectable people of the tribal areas who cannot cope with this situation have left for D.I. Khan, Kohat, Peshawar, Islamabad, Karachi and even some Gulf states. These extremists even target jirgas which are held to discuss the prevalent conditions, with devastating effects. And now even marriage and funeral ceremonies are bombed.

These are all against Pushtun traditions al-Qaeda and Taliban who previously were getting popular are now becoming unpopular and are relying more on their ability of terrorising the people through sheer shock tactics. If the government of Pakistan fails to restore its writ in the tribal areas and the Taliban continue to strengthen their hold, and if the reports about the moving in of al-Qaeda elements including some elements from Sudan are true, then sooner or later the US-led coalition forces would feel compelled to take direct action in the Tribal Areas with or without the consent of the government of Pakistan. This will be a real dilemma for the government. It would either have to pull out from the tribal areas to facilitate the action by the coalition forces under protest or to take attack on the Tribal Areas as an act of war and resist it. Although coalition attacks may only be restricted to the Tribal Areas, these rogue elements will move into the settled areas of Pakistan and further endanger the Federation of Pakistan. Pakistan will thus get sucked into an unwanted war. It will also be an unwanted and undesired war for the US-led coalition forces.

It is therefore essential to strengthen the government of Pakistan and its forces to enable it to take action against these elements. At the same time the government of Pakistan should be given time to resolve this issue through peaceful means, i.e. negotiations and the US and Afghan government should display patience without blaming Pakistan especially through the media.

Implications for Pakistan

Loss of control of the government and the rise of militancy in the tribal areas not only has effects in Afghanistan which are normally overstated, it also poses a direct threat to the Federation of Pakistan with grave implications for peace in South Asia and the world at large. The people of Pakistan are better educated and known for their ingenuity and enterprising nature. Any destabilisation in Pakistan comprising 160 million people and armed with nuclear weapons could pose a far greater threat to world peace than imagined. Therefore, any dangerous misadventure against Pakistan as advocated by some lobbies in Washington under the active advise and propaganda by Israeli, Indian and Afghan circles will prove a very costly undertaking and must not be even thought about. Instead, the world at large needs to understand the situation in Pakistan and help it to overcome the problem.

Pakistan needs to discuss its present policy on terrorism thoroughly in its parliament to give it popular ownership. The government also must quickly devise an effective strategy using all instruments of power including political, economic and military to deal with this problem and to provide security to its own people which is a basic function of any government. This war must be fought as a war for Pakistan and if its advantages are accruing to Afghanistan or to the United States, it must be considered as incidental. The federal government instead of being involved in secondary issues should consider this as a threat to the Federation of Pakistan demanding topmost priority.

The government must not take the situation in tribal area lightly and cannot wish away this situation an ostrich hiding its head in sand. This monster/jinni of 'jihad' which is out of bottle can engulf the whole country. The clock is ticking and the present attitude of tribal administration led by the governor of being a bystander oblivious to what is happening is further tightening the grip of Taliban over the

tribal society. The people of NWFP are really apprehensive of a very dangerous situation developing before their own eyes and are wondering why the government appears to be so indifferent.

Suggested course of action

Since the problem in the Tribal Areas and in Pakistan is the fallout from Afghanistan, therefore until and unless the situation in Afghanistan is resolved its fallout in Pakistan can at best be minimised by it, but cannot be altogether brought to a zero level. Pakistan has suffered for the last 30 years out of its total 60 years of existence because of the situation in this neighbouring country. The government of Afghanistan must, therefore, stop blaming Pakistan for whatever is happening in their country and instead concentrate on improving the situation there. This should be considered as a firm demand from Pakistan. The US-led forces in Afghanistan need to reconsider their strategy turning away from a military-centric to a stabilisation approach. Until the chaotic society in Afghanistan is brought under a proper system of governance, no peace can be expected in this region. In spite of many difficulties there is still a stabilisation force in Kosovo. There is no reason why the UN or the US should not consider this proposal seriously.

Pakistan needs to display its resolve and political will to restore its writ in its Tribal Areas. The government needs to use all elements of national power to resolve this issue. The use of force should always be the last option and extreme care needs to be taken to ensure that there is no collateral damage.

The present system of administration in the tribal areas should have been changed long ago since it is neither in the interest of the common people there nor in the interest of the government, as it cannot discharge its international responsibilities under the present system. It needs to be changed as soon as possible. As for now, as they say “you

don't change horses in mid battle", therefore, inevitably the government has to work through the present system until the situation is brought under control. Under the present system use of force must always be under the political administration and all agencies working there must always be answerable to the political administration. The political administration must be headed by a governor selected on merit considering his ability to deal with the current delicate and extraordinary situation.

The US, EU and the allied forces in Afghanistan must stop pressurising Pakistani government through the media and avoid interfering in the affairs of the state of Pakistan for there is a strong perception that the western powers do not look at the nuclear capability of Pakistan with any kindness, it being a Muslim state.

Conclusion

The Tribal Areas of Pakistan and the provinces of NWFP and Baluchistan have geographical, ethnological, cultural, economic, sociological and religious linkages with Afghanistan, therefore the situation there will also have spillover effects in these areas and vice versa. The local people have not accepted foreign domination for long. The area on Pakistan side has a fairly good administration and the fabric of society is intact in spite of certain governance issues. However, the other side has been under war and turmoil for the last 30 years. This area is therefore highly chaotic and has the potential of destabilizing Pakistan with grave implications for world peace in general and South Asia in particular. Since the problem in Afghanistan has deep religious overtones the US-led allied forces need to reconsider their existing strategy which is too military-centric and switch over the stabilisation strategy which they are already following in Kosovo in Europe. The US and other Western powers also need to help Pakistan in all respects since it has suffered because of the situation in

Afghanistan brought about by the policies of superpowers for their own interests.

Thus no matter how much we as Pakistanis might wish it were not so, the fates of Afghanistan, the tribal areas in particular and Pakistan in general and the people inhabiting these areas are interlinked. There can be no solution in isolation to problems being faced in this area. Any permanent solution would have to cover both sides of the divide, including the tribes who inhabit both sides of the border. But perhaps the solution mostly lies in Afghanistan as the problem flares up for all concerned whenever a foreign entity enters that country, be it the USSR or USA or NATO.

Afghanistan: Integration of Counter-insurgency, Counter-narcotic and Development Policies

Marvi Memon

There should be no doubt in any political analyst or policymaker's mind that until counter-insurgency, counter-narcotics and development policies are reviewed in unison, the state of uncertainty and turmoil will continue unabated in Afghanistan. Progress on all three fronts will only be achieved through a long term integrated strategy which also identifies past shortcomings.

Counter-insurgency

The counter-insurgency tactics need to take into account the nature of the neo-Taliban movement which was not only taking advantage of the disorder created by multinational forces, but also helping integrate the international jihadist movement. It has accepted free market orientation and also espouses belief in the Deobandi tenets of Islam. The neo-Taliban also provide the populace with a cause that feeds off the lack of political representation given to Pushtuns, particularly in respect of their share in the

Afghan National Army. The Pushtuns are 40 per cent of the population and yet have only 32 per cent positions in the officer cadre of the ANA compared to Tajiks who with their 25 per cent population have 56 per cent share in the higher ranks. This is a cause of heart burning among the Pushtuns. Such disparities are among the root causes of insurgency. Moreover the attacks on Pushtuns in the belief that they are Taliban sympathizers, as corroborated by Human Rights Watch, has made their sense of wrong more acute pushing them closer to the insurgents. Pakistan has always maintained that this balance in representation is critical to peace in Afghanistan and that till the disenfranchisement issues are politically handled the neo-Taliban movement will continue to gain momentum. Pakistan has urged for the inclusion of all political forces in the mainstream Afghan politics.

Besides the need to have an understanding of neo-Taliban motivations, an understanding of factors which have weakened state control over much of Afghanistan is required. Reforms are needed in the Ministry of Interior which is geared towards accommodating warlords with their respective power bases at the expense of functionaries loyal to the central government who find it difficult to consolidate state control even in Kabul. Moreover it is reported that the administration is corrupt, arrogant, unskilled and doesn't deliver basic services to promote government's positive image. All these factors need to be addressed in the counter insurgency strategy.

The recruitment strategy of the Taliban also needs to be tackled wisely. The approximately 7,000 hardcore recruits and 10,000 village supporters can be coaxed back as productive members of society instead of being hounded, caught or killed.

Whilst the counter-insurgency effort has been led by the US, its coalition partners have participated with various degrees of commitment. It is this lack of a cohesive 'one team' approach which has adversely affected achievement of

goals in all segments whether military, development or anti-narcotic.

The shortcomings of the different actors involved in the counter-insurgency effort need to be analyzed. A very important component of this effort is the National Service Directorate which is Afghanistan's intelligence service comprising an estimated force of 15,000 informers. They have had limited success due to their outdated methods of coercion to extract information by penalizing local populations. This has alienated people turning their sympathies towards the Taliban.

The foreign forces have mostly been criticized for their reliance on massive air strikes, lack of attention to acquiring knowledge about local characteristics and failure to utilize whatever limited knowledge has been acquired due to quick rotation of staff. The foreign forces have also been criticized for problems resulting from their attitude towards the local people. Forty-four complaints were made against US forces by AIHRC in June 2003-June 2004 period, and 113 the next year. Complaints pertained to lack of respect for locals, plunder of farms for amusement and unauthorized entry into houses. Hostile acts of this kind only result in neutralizing any gains from development initiatives taken. The winning of hearts and minds under such conditions is not possible. Such issues would be attended to immediately in an integrated approach.

The multinational character of the counter-insurgency forces has suffered from lack of unity in intents and purposes. There are many examples of rifts particularly those within ISAF in 2006 pitting the Germans against the Americans and the British. These rifts have added to the uncertainty which has been causing instability and growing sense of disillusionment in the population with the foreign forces. In the final analysis it is such lack of cohesion and working at cross purposes that drives the population into the arms of the Taliban.

One such example of disunity that harmed the counter-narcotic effort was when the British troops in Helmand avoided interfering with the eradication operation (even refusing to seize opium) just when in Kabul US officials were lobbying the government to start spraying poppy fields. The decision taken in this regard irritated British, Canadian and Dutch diplomats who tried to prevent aerial eradication. Such lack of unity affects achievement of desired results, increases insecurity in rural areas and harms government credibility.

The role of another counter-insurgency actor, the Afghan military forces (AMF) has also drawn criticism. Its militiamen were not effective as payment of their salaries and food allowances was not on time. Their indiscipline, lack of clearly defined chain of command, primitive organization has caused serious problems. The other type of militia is the private armies of strongmen and governors. However since most of these governors did not have the necessary means to recruit enough numbers, it was a ramshackle arrangement indeed. The other type of militia which attracted the most criticism belonged to the private security companies whose high handedness was proving counterproductive to dividends of development. Lastly the village militia which had the most potential extending the writ of the state in the interior through patrolling was demoralized on account of poor funding.

In addition to these problems all of these militias were plagued with corruption and indiscipline which eased the job of the insurgents. There are many examples of the police's illegal activities including their involvement in the narcotics business. These in turn made the local population turn towards the Taliban since they could not expect the police to establish law and order. There is no doubt that the low pay structure of the police force also weakened its will and ability to oppose the Taliban. Moreover, as earlier stated, its involvement in narcotics trade robbed it of its legitimacy.

The link of counter-insurgency and development efforts lies in the development approach which holds that there is no point in trying to kill all the fleas; the solution lies in preventing fleas from infesting the dog by undermining conditions that allow the fleas to breed. Thus development was meant to clean the country of insurgency. Mixing it with the traditional approach of periodic raids against insurgents to prevent them from consolidating their positions allowed the Taliban to consolidate their strongholds. Again the issue here is the consistency of one approach. The dispensation of patronage with traditional methods was patchy and inconsistent. Similarly on the narcotics side, despite high rhetoric of eradication, lack of consistency and persistence was hindering the desired outcome. In the Taliban days there had been a significant decrease on this front whereas now Afghanistan is leading in world opium production.

Similarly the problem with patronage policies, like always, was its access to the right people. Early 2007 estimates of US and British defense officials clearly acknowledge that as much as half the aid to Afghanistan failed to reach the target recipients. Authorities siphoned half of it and the rest was hoarded by village elders and not distributed to the villagers. This wastage has to be stopped.

It is also important to accept that while the Taliban have consistently pursued a policy of destabilization, the counter-insurgency efforts have been consistent only in changing strategies on an annual basis. Frequent change in strategies has led to insurgents succeeding in their aims.

The year 2008 is certainly a key time for the strengthening of the Afghan state. The Taliban are entrenched in the south, running parallel governments in several districts and controlling the majority of secondary roads. They have also been successful at hitting 'soft' Western civilian targets in Kabul. This has raised the insurgency efforts onto a higher danger level. The fact that the domestic and international actors have failed to counter the entrenchment of the insurgency in Afghanistan is a

serious issue, especially since elections need to be held on time which will not be possible if the Taliban continue to get stronger. Their position on elections has been unequivocal. They have pledged violence to frustrate the vote. The UN could handle this situation by insisting on member states increasing security and counter insurgency efforts in Afghanistan.

Development policy

One of the key objectives of the development policy should be to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people and to strengthen the state so as to contain insurgency. The weakness of the state feeds the insurgency and thus all efforts are required to strengthen state institutions across the entire geographical territory of Afghanistan.

The issue lies in the fact that the development process has to date been too centralized, top, heavy and insufficient. It has been prescriptive and supply driven, rather than indigenous and responding to Afghan needs. As a result millions of Afghans, particularly in rural areas, still face severe hardships. Conditions of persistent poverty have been a significant factor in the spread of insecurity as well as narco trade and its narco lords.

There have been calls on the donors for improving the impact, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of aid. There needs to be stronger coordination and more even distribution of aid, greater alignment with national and local priorities and increased use of Afghan resources. Indicators of aid effectiveness should be established, and a commission to monitor donor performance is required which decreases the chances of pilferage, theft and corruption. The integration of the refugees returning from Pakistan is important and so is the management of their drug abuse and rehabilitation issues. Donors need to provide sufficient resources for their repatriation and rehabilitation.

It is felt that government capacity to deliver development is weak and corruption is rampant which is hindering service delivery and undermining public confidence. Reforms are urgently required in public administration, anti-corruption regime and the rule of law. A rural development programme is required which builds local government to deliver these very services, which would mean channelling more funds directly to communities for development.

Agriculture is the mainstay of Afghanistan which supports 80 per cent of the population. Agriculture diversification and substitution of drug cultivation is urgently required as a development and a counter narcotic strategy combined. It is a known fact that aggressive eradication and licensing are not useful counter narcotic strategies. Instead a long term sustainable development strategy which prioritizes support for substitute agricultural produce is urgently required. Additionally greater outreach to community elders is required and firm action against major traffickers at all levels of the elite hierarchy is required.

No doubt it is the separation of US and NATO commands which creates inconsistencies in operating standards and gaps in counter insurgency methods. These need to be minimized. In the final analysis all positive development strategies need inclusion in the Afghan national development strategy.

What needs to be recognized is that the pace of reconstruction and development projects is not as slow as it is because of lack of funding, rather it is the lack of skilled workers which hinders utilizing of development funds in ministries and adds to delays. Aid agencies are also hindered in implementing their projects due to security considerations. Thus the integration of development areas and security zones away from the insurgency zones needs careful mapping.

However it is important to note that increasing development assistance without a better development strategy and corruption-free delivery mechanism would be of

little use since it will only feed the bureaucratic corruption chain while reconstruction and development efforts continue on paper without making a dent in the life of the common Afghan.

What is urgently required is support for institution strengthening, supporting parliament, supporting elections, an improved civil service, disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants, a reformed national police force, so that development efforts complement counter-insurgency and counter-narcotic efforts.

Counter-narcotics

The counter-narcotic strategy implementation requires prioritized political will. The problem is serious as the quantum of the output is fast increasing. Since 1991 Afghanistan has been the leading producer of opium and has now also become the main cultivator of the drug. The initial problem of counter-narcotics strategy has been the statistically unknown quantum and its definition. This has made measurement of illicit drug use difficult and has made strategy formulation equally difficult.

The corruption within the narcotic control aid has made the positive efforts redundant as well. The typical sins of narcotics control plague Afghanistan in as much as they plague other countries. The sin of the politics of necessity being the first; the developing countries don't necessarily attach priority to these problems. Second is the sin of politics of corruption typified by countries where politicians are either directly or indirectly involved in illicit activities particularly drug trade. Afghanistan is no exception. The third is the sin of politics of denial whereby developing countries blame western demand for the supply from their soils. Interestingly the US is not seen to be the destination of the Afghan supply; thus many observers have commented on the lack of commitment of counter-narcotics US efforts. Fighting a \$3 billion industry with a budget of few hundred

million and not treating narcotics as a long-term development issue is a demonstration of the low priority US has attached to this goal in Afghanistan.

The causes of drug usage in Afghanistan stem from poverty, a social environment resulting from two decades of civil war and the all round violence. No doubt this does provide the populace with understandable set of motivations, especially since war has caused deaths which have ravaged the family units, with the number of widows and orphans increasing. Survival strategies and rehabilitation institutions are sparsely spread due to lack of transparent funds. There is a vicious circle linking a weak state to narcotic strategies failing.

Interestingly the Taliban's persecution of drug users produced a society where drug users could not be identified easily since they were underground for fear of persecution and thus remedial measures of healthcare were more problematic. Now that the persecution has reduced, this healthcare system has become victim of corruption instead. Additionally the complete ban by Taliban was a temporary policy which increased the debt burden of the Afghan farmers, whilst increasing the wealth for Taliban. Had this ban continued, it is estimated that Taliban would have faced a revolt from debt ridden farmers.

There is no doubt that the strategy of compensation for opium poppy growers has led to an erosion of counter-insurgency efforts as some of these funds have been directed through narco lords to sympathizers of al-Qaeda. Moreover, the militia involved in narco trafficking has further driven the populace away from the state towards the Taliban thus fuelling the insurgency drive.

Considering the fact that one hectare of poppy requires approximately six times the number of person days of work, the substitution of other agricultural products needs to be developed as a viable commercial activity for the impoverished population. The problem is that opium unfortunately has become a non-perishable, low weight, high

value item that represents a commodity for achieving food security. Its attractiveness as a reducer of hunger in a society where food is scarce adds to its value and so does the fact that in the cold and depressed environment its habitual intake is popular amongst the impoverished. There has been little effort made towards a sustainable policy to eliminate its cultivation.

While the Afghan government has set a deadline around 2016 for opium poppy elimination, there is a strong likelihood of this being missed due to the nature of Afghan society: mental health problems, poverty, food insecurity, repression, social disruption, conflict, warlords, commanders, militias, opium farmers, drug traders, and lawlessness. These are all prevalent features which add to the lack of cohesion of counter-insurgency and development efforts. While there is no doubt about an Islamic abhorrence of all inebriating opiates and liquors which discourages its use, this has not prevented its spread since time immemorial. Proper tracking mechanism and enforcement is the only solution, but again this possibility is mired due to the fact that counter insurgency weaknesses have reduced control of the central government in the entire country.

Firstly, there is a need to adopt a comprehensive long term approach. Secondly, the implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy needs to be strengthened. Thirdly, proposals for aggressive eradication should be rejected since small farmers cannot easily shift to alternative crops thereby accentuating poverty and driving them to Taliban protection. Fourthly, proposals for licensing cultivation for medical opiates need to be opposed since that confuses the elimination message and is useless as no tracking methodology is available.

The problem with the new counter-narcotic strategy formulated by US authorities is that it is based on the five pillars of improving public information, alternative development, eradication, law enforcement, and justice reform. It doesn't take into consideration Afghanistan's

deteriorating security and volatile political situation. The US strategy is meant to fight the insurgents and the narcotics trade simultaneously which it cannot do due to capacity issues. NATO is short of soldiers to fight the Taliban let alone fight narco lords. While at best German helicopters can fly over large opium fields, they are not in a position to physically enforce compliance due to shortage of resources. For this a tripling of military and police resources would be urgently required. The sad fact is that private militias belonging to narco lords and traffickers are better paid and equipped than the Afghan National Police which puts the latter in conditions where they can be bribed by these militia.

Conclusion

Instead of linking counter-narcotics to counter-insurgency strategy, it would be prudent to link it to a comprehensive long-term development strategy. Narcotics in Afghanistan are not a law enforcement issue. The central government is very far away from establishing its authority in far flung rural backyard. Afghanistan is a traditional country, where the issue should be dealt with according to local conditions rather than nationally across the territory. A fraction of financial resources which are available could be dedicated to empower traditional councils in villages and district levels, which could become good interlocutors between the government and local farmers in the context of an efficient and effective counter narcotics policy.

The link between counter narcotics, counter 'insurgency' and development policies needs better holistic mapping as well as a constant redefining for relevance. The 'insurgency' root causes need to be resolved eventually through the proportional political representation of all ethnic forces in Afghanistan including the Taliban. Counter-narcotics effort requires the political will of the US and an inclusion of the long-term sustainable policy within their priority lists. Development requires a strengthening of the

state institutions and transparent delivery systems. None of these policy initiatives are possible without immediate and complete integration at all geographical levels. For the sake of strife-free Afghanistan this integration is of immediate importance.

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The Ideological Battle

Shahzadi Beg

It may not be very unlikely if the decisive war against global terrorism is fought along the 2,250-km border between Pakistan and Afghanistan in this 21st century. Seven years after the 9/11 attacks the al-Qaeda leadership is still thought to be hiding somewhere in this long and wild hard- to-watch frontier area. The tribal belt comprising the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is often the suspect zone.

Gilani government's emphasis on dialogue with the militants has caused unease in Washington, which says it does not want to re-invent the wheel after years of negotiations with the Pakistani authorities to get to this point. Pakistan on the other hand now realizes that military operations have only increased militancy and that a comprehensive policy is required.

This is not only because 2007 was one of the bloodiest years which saw not only an unprecedented rise in recruitment but also the use of sophisticated IEDs and guerrilla tactics borrowed from the asymmetric warfare in Iraq. Though militants still consider NATO and US forces as occupation forces in Afghanistan, they have turned inwards

striking at a military seen to be in partnership with the occupiers against the forces of jihad.

A jihad

The re-emergence of jihad in Afghanistan and Pakistan must be understood in the context of the Afghan resistant movement against Soviet occupation conducted by the mujahideen. Holy warriors were funded, armed and trained by the US, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in a tripartite partnership. Millions of dollars were spent indoctrinating the fighters with Wahabi ideology glorifying jihad through literature, preparing them to fight a holy war against the Godless communists. Afghan refugees in Pakistan were encouraged to join political organizations promoting jihad.⁽¹⁾ This glorification of jihad continues despite billions of dollars being spent on the war.

Despite Pakistan's policy of securing strategic depth in Afghanistan through the Taliban, it was realized after the September 11 attacks that its own survival depended on joining forces with the US against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. President Musharraf has argued that Pakistan was economically and socially weak and in the final analysis the Taliban were not worth committing suicide over.⁽²⁾

An unchallenged ideology

Jihadi ideology however remained unchallenged, even as Pakistan began deploying its forces against its own people in the tribal belt and entered areas where no outsider had gone in a hundred years. Sympathies in sections of the army for the mujahideen elements persisted who were perceived to possess a value system and who preferred an honourable death in the cause of Islam than a dishonourable life under alien rule.

Since 2002, jihadis recruited in the tribal belt and in parts of Afghanistan tend to be under the age of 30, and in many cases just teenagers belonging to poor families.

Although they are indoctrinated in al-Qaeda ideology, a fierce anti-American agenda plays a significant part in drawing them together and defining a clear enemy.⁽³⁾

The motivation then for suicide bombers or "shaheeds" is a belief in martyrdom and its rewards in the afterlife, funds for the family, the notion of "badla" or revenge in the Pushtunwali code of conduct, the idea of heroism and being a part of the liberation of Islam.

The perceived aggression against Muslim populations and the occupation of Muslim lands such as Iraq continues to influence the radicalisation of vulnerable individuals from neglected communities whose hope for social justice lies in radical Islamist organisations which are perceived to be credible.⁽⁴⁾

Entrusting costly lethal weapons to young militants is further endorsement of their moral and religious character. Militant groups serve as a conduit for indoctrinating the idea that martyrdom is a religious duty or "farz."

The Wahabi/Salafi ideology used refers to early Muslims, ie those who died within the first 400 years after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Salafis believe in the annihilation of local variants of Islam and advocate a 'pure' version of Islam. Salafi Islam is then an authoritarian political Islam with the aim of establishing a pan-Islamic Caliphate. Salafi-Takfiris are an extremist minority even within the Salafi movement and advocate the killing of opponent Muslims as 'kafirs' or infidels.

A small percentage of Madrasas in Pakistan (many of them remain unregistered) are used as centres of indoctrination for boys. Madrasas provide religious education, free boarding and lodging to poor children who would otherwise receive no education at all. Pakistan has a low literacy rate and less than 2.3 per cent of GDP is spent on government schools in a country where nearly half of its population is still illiterate. Religious seminaries essentially fill the void created by a deficient schooling system in the public sector.

Both the government and the Wafaqul Madaris (federation of madrasas) have not been able to monitor the "type" of Islam being taught in the various seminaries, whether Salafi, Deobandi or Barelvi, etc. Nor is there credible monitoring of the qualifications of teachers and their background. Madrasa graduates are not provided education or skills that will enable them to take up employment in civil society. Unsurprisingly, those not wanting to be madrasa teachers often opt to go to war.

The Lal Masjid stand-off and the military operations in Swat have reinforced the view that madrasas are very much a part of the problem and will have to be a part of the solution. Many students from the Lal Masjid were linked to militant organisations. The recent power struggle seen between various militant groups in FATA, under the umbrella of the Pakistani Taliban have added to an already complex issue.

The way terrorism is generally understood in the world is as a group and as an organisational process. However, the individual process remains poorly understood. The push and pull factors create multiple pathways. There are different points of entry and exit.

The process of recruitment into militancy takes place over a protracted period. The tribal belt is a region of high unemployment, currently running at 50 per cent. The 15-30 year age group accounts for 75 per cent of the population. They have easy access to weapons. Funds for reconstruction and job creation have not been efficiently utilized by the government. Moreover, the Taliban are able to pay their fighters more than double the amount the Afghan government pays to its regular soldiers.

Taliban funds are channelled from the drugs trade and allegedly from oil-rich Wahabi donors in the Middle East. Baitullah Mehsud has boasted of having hundreds of teenage boys willing to be suicide bombers and claims he cannot "process" them quickly enough. He reportedly receives more than Rs 15 million per month, for the purchase

of weapons and to pay compensation to the families of suicide bombers.⁽⁵⁾

The nexus between Sunni sectarian groups, such as Sipah-e-Sahaba, the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Pakistan is close. After the revival of the Shia in Iraq following the US invasion, Sunni sectarian groups got closer to the Wahabi ideology of the Taliban. The nexus now takes in most of Pakistan's major cities. The strength of the militants lies primarily in three areas: easy access to funds, easy access to recruits and an unchallenged ideology.

How then can the chain of recruitment be broken?

Disengagement from terrorism cannot be viewed in isolation. To understand how and why people would leave terrorism behind, we need first to understand how and why they join terrorism at all. In Yemen the motivating factor was the conflict in Afghanistan and, subsequently, Iraq. In Pakistan while the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine are viewed as occupation of Muslim lands by non-Muslims, it is also the perceived conspiracy against Islam and the mistreatment of Muslims in places such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, that provide motivating factors.

There are also other more complex factors including the exploitation and abuse of the children of the poor who have no means of earning a livelihood.

Teenagers are more easily indoctrinated through a sense of idealism without the ability to make rational and informed choices. They have even been used as unwitting accomplices in suicide attacks. Some have been drugged before carrying out attacks. The long-term psychological damage to these children is immeasurable.

Militant recruitment methods rely on Islamic identification that crosses national and cultural boundaries. A suicide bomber perceives himself to be a soldier of God. The reward of heaven is in sharp contrast to his impoverished life

on earth. As a shaheed he will be allowed to intercede with Allah on the Judgement Day (*shifa'at*) on behalf of 70 family members. His sense of worth is heightened.

The mind of a suicide bomber is captured through the concept of Jihad Al Asghar, the minor jihad which is also known as the jihad of the sword. To place one's cause before one's life comes from the power of religious conviction. The Takfiri imprint is at the centre of the Salafi definition of jihad of the sword. It seeks a worldwide caliphate and preaches that Dar al Islam or the Muslim land can become Dar Al Kufr or the land of infidels under un-Islamic rule. It is this notion that provides justification for attacks on the governments of Muslim countries like Pakistan.

To win the war against global terrorism and provide strategies for peace, there must be a challenge to the ideology that misuses religion to murder both victims and attackers. This is the single most important issue in the "long war."

The use of force can never win the political and the ideological battle. One of the key challenges then in the Pakistan context is to change the extremist mindset formed during sectarian conflicts and under national strategies relating to Kashmir and the mujahideen campaign against the Soviet army in Afghanistan. The memory of these conflicts continues to feed the militant mind.

Well-structured interventions striking at the core of the militants' ideology can significantly impact on the supply and demand of suicide bombers.

Individual disengagement from terrorism may reduce the number of active militants and the size of terrorist groups. This in turn may reduce the suffering and victimization caused by terrorist violence. Defectors from militant groups may serve as credible opinion builders against terrorism and they may also provide valuable intelligence. They can sow dissent within the terrorist milieu and provide an exit from terrorism and underground life.

Disengagement programmes

A number of countries including Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Indonesia have embarked upon disengagement programmes for former jihadis based on the recognition that Wahabi/Salafi ideology uses the concept of jihad to recruit militants to fight against 'Western Crusaders'. Militants want to be part of a global jihad rather than local struggles. The global jihadis are aware that "the battle of ideas" will be their key battleground.

Yemen's Dialogue Committee has argued that the dialogue has a special importance in counter-terrorism because each terror act is based on a belief. It is this belief which must be challenged through religious and intellectual discussion, with the ability to derive Sharia rules from its sources.

The subjects of the dialogue included jihad — when, how and who has the right to announce it — the concept of State, government, succession and rights of the ruler, laws of the land, the rights of non-Muslims, state security, violence, extremism, moral issues, migration and rights of individuals including those in detention.

In Saudi Arabia, detainees are treated as victims who have been misled. The programme is run by the Interior Ministry. There are long study sessions over 6 weeks and detainees have to take an examination. There are 50 psychologists and psychiatrists working with the detainees and their families.

The rehabilitation centres are in former resorts. Detainees and their families are provided funds on release and marriages are arranged for some. They have to remain under supervision as part of the agreement on release. Of the 3000 prisoners rehabilitated, 1,500 have been released. Some are required to complete their sentences. The success rate is considered to be about 80 per cent.

A debate on jihad

Outside Pakistan and Afghanistan, the debate on jihad is opening up.

Sayed Imam Abdulaziz al Sharif, also known as Dr Fadi, founder of Egyptian jihad, has recently released a ten-part document called *Tarshid al amal al jihad wa al alam*⁽⁶⁾ (Rationalizing the jihadi action in Egypt and the world), challenging Salafi jihadi ideology. One of his previous publications was *Al omda al edda* (The master in making preparation in jihad), considered compulsory reading for jihadis.

Dr Fadi now argues that to accept Islam means to accept sharia and therefore jihad. However he advocates that the duty to wage jihad is dependent upon comprehension and ability. He states a number of prerequisites before a person can embark upon jihad; these include providing for dependents whilst going on jihad, parental permission for minors and adherence to a code to respect the life and property of Muslims.

He states that jihad against the leaders of Muslim countries is not acceptable and that there is prohibition on killing foreigners and tourists in Muslim countries. He considers it treacherous to kill non-Muslims after their entering that country with its government's permission. He believes that single individuals cannot conduct jihad on their own, nor can fraud or illegal means be used to fund jihad. This directly challenges the use of drug money to fund jihad by the Taliban and their use of minors for suicide missions often without the knowledge of their families. It also challenges the targeting of foreigners and the leaders of Muslim countries.

Pakistan's peace agreements

Neither Pakistan nor Afghanistan has any formal disengagement programme. The jihad debate has not taken

off in the way that it is beginning to in the Middle East and South-East Asia. Pakistan's attempts at building bridges for peace have come in the form of peace agreements with tribesmen.

Military operations have long been seen as short term. Both the government and the military recognise that only a political solution can bring lasting peace. The peace agreements must be viewed against the backdrop of a heavily armed tribal society, which is an honour or 'ghairat'-based society in which revenge plays an important part.

Central to the peace agreements has been a pledge by the tribes to expel foreign fighters. Those providing assistance to them risk collective punishment for the whole tribe including demolition of homes and payment of substantial fines. Although foreign fighters have been expelled, many have returned.

From the outset the US has feared that peace agreements are unsustainable and in fact solidify al-Qaeda safe havens, providing breathing space for al-Qaeda and the Taliban to regroup and train fighters.

The recent announcement by the Gilani government of dialogue with the militants has been responded to positively by the militants. However, Baitullah Mehsud wants the army to move troops away from the border and Faqir Mohammed doesn't want to be prevented from waging jihad against the occupation forces in Afghanistan! Although it is safe to say there is a long way to go, dialogue can sow the seeds of dissent.

A sustainable strategy for peace

A sustainable strategy for peace must divide moderate factions from radical factions by initiating dialogue on the ideological battle.

The presence of al-Qaeda, the Taliban and sectarian groups along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border together with Pakistan's strategic geographical position close to

Afghanistan, Iran and the Central Asian republics, coupled with the inevitable competition over natural resources in the region, and the narcotics corridor makes it arguably the most dangerous place in the world. There remain serious concerns over the flow of weapons. The drugs trade and the power of the mullah in politicizing every religious issue add to an already volatile situation.

The Taliban have partly enforced sharia in their strongholds in North and South Waziristan, Bajaur, Khyber and Mohmand agencies. Militants have also expanded their sphere of activity to settled districts such as Bannu, Tank, Kohat and DI Khan.

FATA should be integrated into the NWFP and the government needs to directly address the disempowerment of the people. Jurisdictional problems of the security services expose vulnerabilities in the security apparatus and put ordinary people at risk.

Military operations make political administration dysfunctional providing active support for non-state actors.

The repatriation of Afghan refugees needs to be speeded up. Afghan refugees in refugee camps in the NWFP and Balochistan have been accused of harbouring terrorists and facilitating their entry across the border into Afghanistan. Easement rights for the Pushtuns complicates the matter still further. The military failure of the Soviets in Afghanistan has fired the militants' enthusiasm to defeat the "last superpower."

The strength of the militants can be reduced significantly by political handling of the tribes. The Political Parties Act should be extended to FATA and local government strengthened through decentralisation with robust measures in respect of accountability of funds. The comprehensive Peace Plan of the ANP which will shortly be placed before the Provincial Assembly should be supported. It provides for job creation, rural development, village peace committees, extra police and the rehabilitation of 12,000 former militants.

The battle of ideas must be understood in the context of a Pakistan dominated by its military which has weakened democracy, retarded institution-building and created paths of alternative ideologies. Any disengagement programme must then win over the military mindset so instrumental in strengthening the roots of jihad against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

The aim is not to undermine sacred values but to encourage more democratic and legal channels to express opinions and denounce the taking of innocent lives both of the victim and of the perpetrator through "martyrdom cults".

A long-term strategy must not be sacrificed by short-term gains. Intelligence agencies must work within the parameters of the rule of law. This means an end to practices such as extraordinary rendition, the use of torture, missing persons and detention without charge.⁽⁷⁾

The flow of terrorist financing must be disrupted without unfairly targeting Islamic charities. Islamists in many cases are seen as the only credible force to provide social justice and take on the military and the feudals who continue to manipulate the poor.

Since the start of this year, the US has repeatedly raised the prospect of increased covert operations by the CIA in Pakistan's tribal belt — a sort of "surge" to dismantle al-Qaeda safe havens and take out the leadership of the Pakistani Taliban.⁽⁸⁾

This has caused alarm in Pakistan. Any such operations by the US even with Pakistan's agreement are only likely to provide further ammunition to the militants and unleash a new breed of jihadists. It is also likely to have unintended and potentially catastrophic consequences in spreading the insurgency and fracturing the army as an institution. The long-term fallout may be felt in western capitals.

Though Pakistan needs to improve its counter-insurgency operations, surveillance, intelligence and disrupting the flow of terrorist financing, a credible re-

evaluation of Salafi-Jihadi ideology must take centre stage in the long war.

Pakistan urgently requires both a formal programme for the rehabilitation of militants in detention but also a disengagement strategy in the wider community to prevent those on the cusp from joining violent extremism. This will strike at the heart of the process of recruitment.

A comprehensive and sustainable approach requires vocal support from civil society to de-legitimise suicide attacks. Despite the fact that an overwhelming proportion of the victims of terrorist attacks are civilians, elements of the Pakistani population believe that this is America's war and that Pakistan is paying the price. Unfortunately this is reinforced by the very public demand that Pakistan needs to do more.

The current environment is conducive to a nationwide debate on jihad. The very existence of Pakistan is at stake. The media must not be afraid to play its role to focus on societal support for a policy of collective disengagement.

The issue here is one of impact in its widest sense which also serves to illustrate that suicide attacks are psychological warfare that kill and maim indiscriminately, traumatising entire communities and perpetuating a fear of crowded places.

It is equally important to disseminate literature to discredit the militants and stem the flow of extremism through mosques, madrasas, 'taleemi jalsas' and radio stations.

Dialogue is an attempt to break the Wahabi/Salafi chain. Dialogue prevents radical minds from being isolated and indoctrinated behind closed doors. It prevents people being stranded in jihad. Radical Islam must be opened to public debate, inside and outside prison.

Terrorist organisations and their justification for violence need to be discredited. This can be done by displaying posters across the tribal belt with verses from the

Quran prohibiting terrorism and gratuitous acts of violence and educating people so that they are not intimidated or exploited by militants and have the confidence to protect the lives of their sons.

The authorities need to jam illegal FM radio stations churning out hate and promote their own radio stations to propagate the true spirit of Islam. Part of a national media debate could include a programme along the lines of an Iraqi programme where jihadis were confronted by the mothers of those whom they had killed.⁽⁹⁾

Terrorist organisations can be deprived of human capital by job creation, to provide an alternative means of livelihood to those on the cusp. Promised development in the tribal belt must be accelerated so that locals believe they have a stake in the future.

There is also an urgent need to reform the public system of education. This must include the training of teachers and overhauling the curricula. There must also be monitoring of religious instruction in madrasas. Only the teaching of mainstream subjects in the syllabus or vocational training will enable graduates to find a variety of employment in civil society.

This is all part of nation-building through social and economic reforms in which the media can play a crucial role as watchdog particularly in challenging issues of poor governance and corruption.

The presence of NATO and US in Afghanistan will continue to be the rallying call for liberation and Pushtun nationalism. However, the way forward must be coherent and unified policies between Pakistan and Afghanistan, relying on their own indigenous strength and mobilising public opinion to support them against forces that want to destabilise both countries.

Conclusion

Pakistan as the decisive battleground in the global fight against terrorism must break the indoctrination of vulnerable young men. This is where the end game will be played out. Terrorist organisations including al-Qaeda and the Taliban must not be allowed to recruit unabated.

Only challenging the religious ideology will provide Pakistan with hope for the future and retard the slide into violent extremism. In this era of intervention, it may yet turn the tide and emerge as the beginning of a dialogue for peace.

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Peace and Stability, Good Governance and Development in Afghanistan

Laura Schuurmans

Introduction

Pushtuns have dominated Afghanistan's struggle for power since it was founded in 1747. Since its inception until the communist arrival in 1978, all rulers were Pushtuns from the renowned Durrani tribe, with only a brief interruption when a Tajik rebel, Bachcha Saqqa, seized power in January 1929, until he was defeated by Nadir Khan nine months later. Struggle for power continued inside Afghanistan between the British Empire and the tribes and later between various warring factions to gain control of Kabul until the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979.

After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, the different entities that initially fought against the Soviets now started fighting against each other and a civil war erupted. Hundreds of thousands of people died, and millions sought refuge across the borders of Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia.

The emergence of the Taliban in 1994 was initially widely welcomed by the Afghans who were tired of continuous fighting and who were looking for a stable and peaceful country. However, the Taliban soon after coming into power started enforcing a harsh Sharia system and became notorious for violation of women's rights. They also allowed al-Qaeda's network to operate freely in Afghanistan.

After 9/11, the eyes of the world were turned to Afghanistan from where the attack against the United States was allegedly planned. As a result, the United States backed by the United Nations Security Council invaded Afghanistan to remove the Taliban from power, to destroy al-Qaeda's network and eliminate its leaders. The US-led "Operation Enduring Freedom" rapidly accomplished its mission and ISAF (International Security Assistance Forces) were installed to stabilize and reconstruct Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan accepted the coalition forces, who they thought would give them peace and stability and hope for a more prosperous life. However, since the Taliban spring offensive in 2006, the international coalition forces are rapidly losing the support of the Afghans and the Taliban are gaining greater control over the country. Moreover, the Kabul government under President Hamid Karzai controls just 30 per cent of the country.⁽¹⁾

Present situation

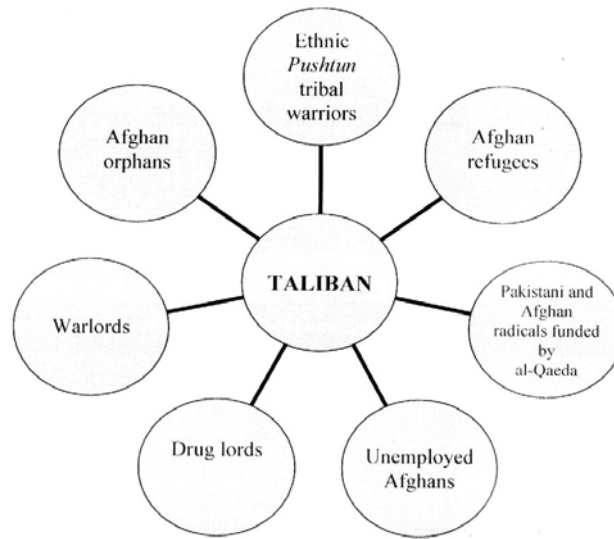
The Bonn Agreement in 2001 was intended as a first step towards the establishment of a broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government, determined to help the Afghan people end the tragic conflicts in their country and promote national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights.⁽²⁾ However, the international coalition forces have been unable to stabilize the country.

In 2006, US Marine Corps General James Jones, NATO's supreme commander of operations, admitted that

the fierce resistance put up by the Taliban and the burgeoning insurgency had taken the alliance by surprise. NATO forces have realized that an all-out war is at hand, rather than the peacekeeping mission that was imagined earlier.⁽³⁾

ISAF-NATO forces are becoming more and more engaged in open warfare against different entities that fight against the government instead of their initial peacekeeping mission to bring stability and reconstruction to war-torn Afghanistan.

At present, the majority of the Taliban are no longer the 'Taliban' driven by religious ideology; actually they are different entities that have come together to join the insurgency against the central government and often fight for economic benefits.



The foot soldiers of the insurgency are people recruited from within Afghanistan. They are driven by poverty, poor education and general disenchantment with their place in society. These internal fighters are not ideologically driven, but their ranks have swelled in support of the growing upper echelons of the insurgency. But they

are thought to be ready to disengage from the insurgency if the appropriate incentives, particularly economic, are provided.⁽⁴⁾

Throughout history food has always been scarce in Afghanistan; but more than two decades of conflict and extreme drought has left many Afghans often with the only choice to rely on humanitarian aid. At present, it is estimated that agricultural production and livestock numbers are only enough to feed half of the population.⁽⁵⁾ Moreover, in 2008 another one million people are at risk of food shortages due to an increase in prices of essential items such as wheat flour and vegetable oil. Over the past year the price of wheat flour has increased by nearly 60 per cent.⁽⁶⁾

Air strikes conducted by the coalition forces have injured, killed and displaced many innocent civilians. The displacement of 15,000 families in the south has been a major cause for humanitarian concern.⁽⁷⁾

The authority of President Hamid Karzai barely extends beyond Kabul's suburbs and warlords are once again in control of most of the country.⁽⁸⁾ However, throughout history, respective governments have always depended on the support of the warlords.

Opium remains a serious concern in Afghanistan and it is often the only source of income to feed farming families. According to the latest UN drug report, Afghanistan's narcotics production accounts for the world's 92 per cent.⁽⁹⁾

International coalition forces

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was created in accordance with the Bonn Conference, in December 2001, after the ousting of the Taliban regime. Through the UN-mandated ISAF NATO is assisting the Afghan government in extending and exercising its authority and influence across the country, creating conditions for stabilization and reconstruction.⁽¹⁰⁾

However, since its spring offensive in 2006, the ISAF is getting increasingly involved in open warfare; 2007 has been the bloodiest year in Afghanistan's insurgency and the southern part has degenerated in open warfare which has stopped development which is essential to win the hearts and minds of the people. As a consequence, the Afghans often consider the foreign troops the aggressor and an occupying force instead of a peacekeeping mission seeking to bring stability and reconstruction to the country. This is also used by members of al-Qaeda to foster the jihad against the international coalition forces. Moreover, due to the deteriorating security and the aerial bombings, the local villagers have also been losing trust in the coalition forces and have started supporting the Taliban while many other Pushtuns show sympathy towards the Taliban as the central government in Kabul has not provided them with the promised development and the basic needs for survival. They have also excluded the Pushtuns from important decision-making positions within the government. The high level of civil casualties caused by aerial bombing add to the alienation of the people. International coalition forces rely heavily on air strikes for cover because they are unable to defend themselves if they encounter large groups of insurgents.⁽¹¹⁾

The Dutch military in Afghanistan have a different approach compared to the forces from other countries. They use the so-called 'oil spot' approach, where they operate in less hostile areas to assist in reconstruction to win the hearts of the population and slowly but steadily this 'oil spot' will grow. The central idea is that if foreign military forces show restraint and respect, and help the local government to govern, then these areas will expand, slowly but persistently, like an oil stain across a shirt. As they grow, the theory says, the Taliban's standing will decline. ISAF is not in Afghanistan to fight the Taliban, but to make the Taliban irrelevant and they are there to improve Afghan living conditions and self governance.⁽¹²⁾

During their mission they may have accomplished little but much in the context of a different approach. For the community small things mean a lot and the ISAF forces have repaired ambulances, reconstructed roads and schools and repaired water wells.⁽¹³⁾ However, despite these efforts the Dutch military are unable to win the hearts and minds. According to Dutch experts the Taliban cannot be defeated by military means only and a former Dutch minister urgently requests to start negotiations with the Taliban with whom a cease-fire would be the first step towards a solution of the immense problems in Afghanistan. Moreover, according to Dutch journalist, Arnold Karskens, more has been destroyed by the Dutch military through aerial bombings than what they have reconstructed.⁽¹⁴⁾

Peace and stability

Since the US-led invasion in 2001, the international community has made efforts to assist in the reconstruction and stabilization of Afghanistan and different bodies have been playing important roles to accomplish this. However, western politicians recently said that Afghanistan “risked becoming a failed state” again because of rising insecurity, rampant corruption and booming drug trafficking.⁽¹⁵⁾

UNAMA, the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, was established and aimed at supporting the process of rebuilding and national reconciliation outlined in the Bonn Agreement of December 2001, which is to provide political and strategic advice for the peace process; providing good offices, assisting Afghanistan’s government towards implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, promoting human rights, providing technical assistance, and continuing to manage all UN humanitarian relief, recovery, reconstruction and development activities in coordination with the government.⁽¹⁶⁾

However, according to the Ministry of Interior, planning capabilities are significantly limited by the absence

of a force structure and designation of responsible personnel. Moreover, the current staff is not trained to think or work strategically and lacks necessary experience in related management tasks.⁽¹⁷⁾ Also, the authority of Karzai's administration does not extend far beyond Kabul, and warlords remain in firm control of many parts of the country, while Taliban insurgents move to fill the power vacuum in contested areas.⁽¹⁸⁾

The Karzai government's own problems are apparent — discontented warlords, a vigorous drug trade, the Taliban, and a rudimentary economy and infrastructure. For losing the confidence of the Afghan people government blames the slow pace of reconstruction and insufficient financial support from the international community.⁽¹⁹⁾

The Afghan NGO Coordination Bureau (ANCB) has a network of some 200 NGOs in the country with its main objective to bring coordination among its members together with the government, international organizations, UN and donor agencies to reconstruct and develop the country.⁽²⁰⁾ However, there is a growing concern within ministry circles and among the public that NGOs are misusing funds by operating their organizations for private gains, and enriching the founders and staff, and by failing to fulfil their public benefit purposes.⁽²¹⁾

Most international officials, aid workers and consultants in Afghanistan live a hermetically sealed life — advised not to step outside without armed security guards, and often working at very high salaries on very short-term contracts and too much of the money earmarked for aid to Afghanistan actually goes straight back to donor countries.⁽²²⁾

The United States is the largest reconstruction aid provider to Afghanistan, accounting for US \$ 11.4 billion. Their strategy is focused on several key goals:

- To increase the size and capabilities of the Afghan security forces. Together with the Afghan

government and NATO, they have created a new joint intelligence operations centre in Kabul so that all forces fighting the terrorists in Afghanistan have a common picture of the enemy.

- To work together with their allies to strengthen NATO forces in Afghanistan.
- To help President Karzai improve provincial governance and develop Afghanistan's rural economy.
- To help President Karzai reverse the increase in poppy cultivation that is aiding the Taliban.
- To help President Karzai fight corruption — particularly in Afghanistan's judicial system.⁽²³⁾

However, despite the billions of dollars provided by the US government, the amount of money promised per head for Afghanistan was far lower than in other recent post-conflict countries, and too little of it has gone into increasing the capacity of the Afghan government to run things for itself.⁽²⁴⁾ Moreover, in a report published by the Ministry of Interior it is stated that the international community's oversight organizations are complex and not yet effective in preparing, evaluating, and explaining a master plan of growth, change, and spending; nor are they that open, transparent and fast.⁽²⁵⁾

The European Union assistance strives for the establishment of a democratic, accountable, sustainable and self-sufficient Afghan State, capable of exercising its sovereignty and protecting its citizens' rights. It also attaches special importance to the protection of human rights, and encourages the government to reinforce its commitment in that regard. European Union aid to Afghanistan amounted to one third of the assistance pledged by the international community.⁽²⁶⁾

After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 Afghanistan's neighbouring countries had their own agenda to gain

influence in the war-torn country for their own benefit and to ensure stability along its borders. Each country independently has, overtly or covertly, supplied Afghanistan with political, financial or military aid.

The Iranian government, in particular, has consistently portrayed its activities there as enhancing Afghan stability and security. According to the Iranians, it is in their interest to see a strong government in Kabul, which will prevent a repeat of the 1980's and 1990's, when millions of Afghan refugees streamed over the border into Iran.⁽²⁷⁾

During the Tokyo Donor Conference in 2002, the Iranians pledged US \$ 560 million in aid and loans for the Afghan government. The Iranians have also focused their efforts on rebuilding Afghanistan's transportation and communication infrastructures.⁽²⁸⁾

Pakistan, as well, has always aimed at having a "friendly" Afghanistan to boost its economy, to safeguard their western border and to prevent any further complications related to the Durand Line and the Pushtunistan (land for the Pushtuns) issue. In 1893, the British divided the Pushtuns on both sides of the border of Afghanistan and what was then British-India. This border has never been recognized by Afghanistan and by the majority of the Pushtuns living in Afghanistan and which, despite regular border check points, has caused illegal cross-border traffic between the two countries that created a safe haven for the insurgency along Pak-Afghan border. After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, former Pakistan president. Zia-ul-Haq, always claimed to favour the creation of a pro-Pakistan government in Kabul.

India has been deeply involved in Afghanistan's reconstruction and has gained stronger influence over the past years, leaving Pakistan on the sidelines.

The post-Taliban political setup in Kabul is favourable to Delhi and a serious threat to Pakistan's geo-political interests. The Northern Alliance has strong ties with India where many of its leaders have a second home. Major reconstruction contracts have been awarded to Indian firms

and these are being manipulated to Pakistan's disadvantage.⁽²⁹⁾

As long as India and Pakistan remain hostile to each other, Afghanistan would remain strategically important to both. It is vital to Pakistan that it does not have unfriendly powers on both its eastern and western borders, just as from India's perspective, Afghanistan would provide a good strategic high-ground to squeeze Pakistan.⁽³⁰⁾

According to NATO supreme commander General James Jones "by far, the Afghan National Army is the most successful pillar of our reconstruction efforts to date".⁽³¹⁾ As of April 2007 the ANA has grown to 46,000 active troops.⁽³²⁾ Reports suggest that instead of building a 70,000-soldier Afghan National Army as agreed to in the 2002 Bonn Conference, the (US) Administration intends to support a 50,000-soldier force, while some Afghan officials suggest that a 150,000-man army will be needed to ensure both internal and external security. Senior US officials have also stated that the Afghan National Army needs to be significantly better equipped if it is to become an effective security force.⁽³³⁾

However, it does not remain an easy task and there is a large pool of combat veterans but almost all have been guerilla fighters and a large majority have never served in an organized and professional army loyal to the state, as opposed to strongmen, religious parties, ethnic or tribal affiliations that they had fought for.⁽³⁴⁾ Also, a lot of soldiers are barely literate, and the reason a lot of soldiers were leaving was that the pay was extremely poor. The Taliban are offering US \$300 a month whereas a first-year soldier in the Afghan National Army earns only US \$ 70 a month.⁽³⁵⁾

According to the Ministry of Interior, there are 61,879 personnel assigned to the Afghan National Police.⁽³⁶⁾ However, Germany wasted years training the wrong kind of police at inadequate levels. Effective police now have to be created virtually from the ground up, and NATO/ISAF aid is needed to build the capacity of the Ministry of Interior and in

training, equipping and basing the Afghan National Police.⁽³⁷⁾ As a consequence, in 2007 EU defence ministers in Brussels agreed to deploy a force built around 160 police officers for tasks ranging from basic recruit training to tutoring of senior Afghan commanders on criminal investigations and support for border control.⁽³⁸⁾

The main objective of ISAF is to create a secure environment and reconstruct the country. As of 7 February 2007, ISAF strength stands at some 35,460 troops, and an additional 8,000 remain deployed under United States-led coalition command.⁽³⁹⁾

However, the increasing pace of the Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan suggests it is only a matter of time before the commanders of the US-led coalition are faced with telling their political leaders that a decision must be made to either heavily reinforce coalition forces, which appears to be necessary, or begin preparations to withdraw from the country.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Good governance

After more than two decades of armed conflict Afghanistan faces a large number of political, social and economic challenges to bring durable peace and stability back to the country.

Since the Taliban fell in 2001 and a new government was installed under the provisions of the Bonn Agreement, central control has remained weak in Afghanistan and the government administration is far from effective, and suffers from a number of systemic problems including fragmented administrative structures, with many overlapping and unnecessary functions; and difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled professionals with management and administrative experience.⁽⁴¹⁾

According to former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, good governance is perhaps the single most

important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.⁽⁴²⁾

Theoretically, good governance features eight major characteristics:

- participation
- orientation
- accountability
- transparency
- responsiveness
- effectiveness and efficiency
- equity and inclusiveness
- rule of law

However, more than two decades of armed conflict has destroyed the entire infrastructure of the country. The vast majority of educated people have fled. Therefore, in this fragile newly built state the major characteristics of good governance are virtually absent.

To build a strong government, the basic needs for survival should be taken care of, so that the people have confidence in the central government and they do not support the Taliban. It is not ideology that people generally live on. They require the basic necessities to survive or prosper on a day-to-day basis. To varying degrees they are watching all the time to see which way the wind is blowing, and they will adjust their own behaviour, and realign themselves politically, accordingly.⁽⁴³⁾

Henry A. Crumpton, a former CIA officer who played a key role in ousting the Taliban and became the State Department's counter-terrorism chief, said winning a war like the one in Afghanistan required American personnel to "get in at a local level and respond to people's needs so that the enemy forces cannot come in and take advantage"⁽⁴⁴⁾

However, in Afghanistan, not even the minimum requirements for basic survival are being looked after. The Senlis Council research indicates that 70 per cent of the Afghans are chronically malnourished, only 25 per cent have

access to safe drinking water and only one in four children reaches the age of five.⁽⁴⁵⁾ As a consequence, the people of Afghanistan often have no hope left and it would be natural if they looked towards those who offered them those basic requirements that are necessary for survival.

The primary objectives that must be achieved to win the hearts and minds of the Afghans and prevent them from joining the insurgency are:

- Food and safe drinking water
- Shelter
- Clothing

These are the very basic human needs which though they do not seem to be much mean a lot for those who must wage a daily struggle to just survive.

The United Nations WFP's Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) supports each year approximately 3.4 million Afghans through various activities, including food for work (FFW), food for training (FFT) and food for education (FFE), all in partnership with the government, non-government partners and communities.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The dependence on food supplies from the international community cannot solve Afghanistan's food problem. It is essential that the country achieves self-sufficiency in food production and becomes independent of international aid donors. But this would be a difficult goal as after decades of conflict much of the country's farming infrastructure has been destroyed. Food security depends on agricultural output, which relies on sufficient water, a functioning irrigation system, rainfall, and a fertile soil.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The government of Afghanistan has identified agriculture and rural development as key priority areas and the Afghan National Development Framework outlines rehabilitation of agriculture and irrigation infrastructure as important component of its developmental strategy.⁽⁴⁸⁾ During the war against the Soviets much of the irrigation

systems and fertile land for agricultural purposes were destroyed. Moreover, the Soviets laced fertile land with millions of landmines. Today Afghanistan is one of the heaviest mined countries in the world.⁽⁴⁹⁾

The deterioration of almost all the irrigation systems — big, medium or small — in the country, first started in 1980 during foreign occupation and the second blow was dealt during the civil war period between 1988 and 1992. The decline in the recovery in irrigated area has continued over the last two decades.

Although agriculture is the largest source of livelihood for the people, it is remarkable that only a small percentage of development aid actually goes to agriculture. The United States is the largest spender in Afghanistan but a senior American commander said that even as the military force grew last year, he was surprised to discover that the number of US government agricultural experts could be counted on fingers.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Women's issues – participation

Women played a central role in the Afghan family and their participation on the social level was growing. Before the Soviet invasion, the Afghan women made up 70 per cent of school teachers, 40 per cent of doctors in Kabul and other major cities, and 50 per cent of government workers.⁽⁵¹⁾ However, after more than three decades of armed conflict adult women's literacy stands at as low as 14 per cent and in some districts only 1 per cent.⁽⁵²⁾

Now for 98 per cent of Afghan men and women their village and its history are the only reference point by which they judge what is the right thing to do or to think and ancient customs are repeated word for word from generation to generation.⁽⁵³⁾ In Afghanistan's ancient tribal tradition, elderly women have powerful positions inside the family. They are the one in charge of social activities, day-to-day life and family related decisions.

Therefore, primary education to eradicate illiteracy is one of the foremost goals to achieve if women are to regain their importance in society. At present, approximately 30 per cent of girls are in schools, but in some districts it's as low as 1-2 per cent.⁽⁵⁴⁾ In rural areas agriculture is usually left entirely to women and a large percentage of Afghan women, especially in poor and rural areas, have been oppressed through tribal traditions which goes back into pre-Taliban history since women's life has provided the raw material to establish ethnic prominence. Tribal laws and sanctions have routinely taken precedence over Islamic and constitutional laws in deciding gender roles, especially through kinship hierarchies in the rural areas. Tribal power plays, institutions of honour, and inter-tribal shows of patriarchal control have put women's position in jeopardy.⁽⁵⁵⁾

The women who are part of the elite are great examples as role models for Afghan women as they have often marched towards modernization but the vast majority of women still have a long way to go.

In order to enable women to become more independent, Mercy Corps, an American NGO that also provides micro finance, has supported 16,900 clients of which 82 per cent are women. The average loan is about US \$ 220 and with that money clients open or build small businesses in all areas of economic life including weaving, carpentry, tailoring, hairdressing, food processing, kite production, knitting, leather work and animal husbandry.

In an interview, Ariana's managing director said that "helping women establish a business not only provides critical income to their families, it is often the deciding factor that helps them leave the confines of their home and take part in life outside."⁽⁵⁶⁾ This income then can also be used to send their children to school, to buy proper nutrition and get access to better healthcare for both mothers and children.

Rule of law

Afghanistan does not seem to have a genuine system of justice at present. To be sure, there are many appointed judges and prosecutors in the country; there are laws on the books, and there are occasional trials, but there is not a functioning system. Court management is archaic or non-existent, central judicial and prosecuting authorities often have no technical means of communicating with colleagues in the provinces, and judicial appointments are routinely made on the basis of personal or political connections without regard to legal training or other qualifications.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Throughout history, the rule of law has never been strong in Afghanistan and warlords have always been in greater control of the country. After more than two decades of conflict, the rule of law has virtually disappeared and armed warlords, criminal gangs, insurgents, drug lords and other entities that are against the central government are all violating human rights and are struggling for power in their regions.

“Warlords” can be a useful term to characterize militia leaders who survive overwhelmingly on the strength of their capacity to extract resources from an unwilling population and redistribute them to loyal commanders.

The late king Zahir Shah, Afghanistan’s last king, brought development, social order and democracy to the country. Moreover, he was well respected as he engaged maliks and warlords from the different ethnic tribes and took them in confidence in the decision-making process. During his reign the country was relatively peaceful.

However, in the present government, many warlords receive official positions in their areas of ostensible military strength, contributing to significant problems in terms of poor local governance. A number of them would readily switch their support to drug traffickers or the Taliban if offered a large enough bribe.

The persistent presence of warlords in Afghanistan remains a serious threat to law and order. An extremely difficult yet very important task is to include them in the peace process negotiations and to disarm them particularly of heavy weapons.

Professor William Maley writes in his book *Rescuing Afghanistan* that warlordism must be addressed not simply by deployment of security forces, but by a synoptic process of state consolidation, combined with the promotion of social norms that militate against it, and on occasion the creation of personalized incentives for behaviour modification.⁽⁶⁰⁾

Development

After the US-led invasion in 2001 and the Bonn Agreement, the Afghan government together with the international community has made efforts to reconstruct and develop the country to attain durable peace and stability in the country. However, after the Taliban's spring offensive in 2006, the security situation has been deteriorating and the lack of reconstruction and development work has contributed to the growing dissatisfaction of the people.

More than five years after the Taliban Afghanistan remains extremely poor and highly dependent on foreign aid, agriculture, and trade with neighbouring countries. Much of the population continues to suffer from shortages of housing, clean water, electricity, medical care, and jobs.⁽⁶¹⁾ Overall, only 25 per cent people have access to electricity: of which 73 per cent live in urban areas and only 14 per cent in rural areas.⁽⁶²⁾ Eighty per cent of the Afghan population of approximately 28 million lives in rural areas and according to CARE, which works to fight the underlying causes of poverty in Afghanistan, only 13 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water.⁽⁶³⁾

Although more people have now access to healthcare in rural areas, many complain about the poor medical services and the long distance to walk to get it. Moreover,

newly built hospitals and health clinics lack trained medical staff, proper medication and equipment.

An estimated six million⁽⁶⁴⁾, about 50 per cent of the children, are in school. The other half, especially girls, are still out of school and insecurity remains a major challenge. Education is both used as a target and as a tool for terrorist acts. Moreover, weak infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers and lack of broad-based Islamic education and financial resources are major challenges that confront the education system.⁽⁶⁵⁾

Afghanistan has always been one of the poorest nations in the world where a large percentage of the population struggles to survive on less than a (US) dollar a day.⁽⁶⁶⁾ The average Afghan household's monthly income is \$ 6.⁽⁶⁷⁾

At present, after more than two decades of armed conflict that has destroyed the social, political and economic structure of the country, the need for foreign assistance remains crucial.

Civilization and economy travel on roads and Afghanistan needs to restore, develop and rebuild its road infrastructure throughout the country to connect villages to the major cities. Large parts of Afghanistan are extremely isolated and inaccessible.

Moreover, being a landlocked country, roads are the main transport link to the rest of the world — 95 per cent of all goods that cross the border are transported through roads.⁽⁶⁸⁾

Apart from the reconstructed ring road around Kabul, secondary roads remain underdeveloped. The total length of roads is 34,782 km, of which 3,242 km are main roads, but only 6.8 per cent are paved.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Throughout history, Afghans have been known for their trading skills which formed a strong private sector. But decades of conflict have reduced that sector and its development looks bleak unless the security situation improves and corruption now endemic to Afghanistan is

controlled. Corruption keeps away the foreign investors as well as the Afghans returning from overseas who do not have powerful patrons or understand the system.⁽⁷⁰⁾

During several international conferences in the post-Taliban period, many independent organizations like UN agencies led by UNAMA, bilateral and other country agencies, multi-lateral agencies, including the World Bank, ADB and the EU, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) have worked very hard and have pledged billions of dollars for reconstruction and development. However, donor priorities and the Afghan government's priorities do not necessary coincide.⁽⁷¹⁾ Moreover, more development goes to relatively stable northern and western part of Afghanistan and not to the southern and eastern parts where the insurgency is on the rise.

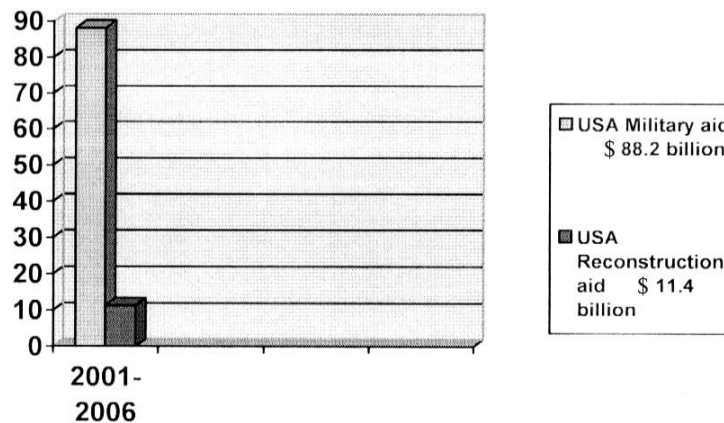
Although a large percentage of the Afghan population has heard of foreign-funded development projects, local officials have complained about the lack of coordination and communication between projects. In some instances, PRTs, NGOs, and/or contractors have acted independently with the best of intentions and the gifts, while appreciated, did little to support a comprehensive development plan. Moreover, goods provided by the NGOs or the PRTs, are perceived as the government's inability or its lack of will to help the people of the countryside.

Agriculture, which accounts for 53 per cent of legal GDP, is the largest economic sector, employing 67 per cent of the labour force.⁽⁷³⁾ The European Commission's assistance to Afghanistan has played an important role in the development of rural economy. A large amount of its budget has been channelled into rural economy to promote food security and to underpin the growth that is necessary to provide alternative livelihood opportunities for rural communities who might otherwise depend on illicit poppy cultivation.⁽⁷⁴⁾

However, funds for development and reconstruction remain short: Only about eight per cent of the money goes to

rebuilding Afghanistan whereas 92 per cent is used for military purposes.

Military and reconstruction aid to Afghanistan



Other than Iran and Pakistan no other country knows Afghanistan better. Iran is Persian-speaking and so is the Northern Alliance and Pushtuns in the southern and eastern part of Afghanistan have close cultural and historical ties with the Pushtuns on the Pakistani side of the border. It's only the Durand Line that divides the same linguistic group in the two countries. Both Pakistan and Iran have their best intentions to have peace in Afghanistan which will prevent a repetition of Afghan refugees fleeing into their country and which will boost bilateral and multilateral trade between the countries.

Central Asia is home to some of the world's great oil and gas reserves. The planned trans-Afghanistan pipeline will transport natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and onwards to its final destination, India, which is facing a shortage of energy due to its large population.⁽⁷⁵⁾ This planned gas pipeline will bring a considerable amount of income to Afghanistan and contribute to its continuing development.

Last but not the least, The NATO/ISAF forces in Afghanistan have played an important role in small-scale reconstruction. With the reconstruction of roads, bazaars, houses, schools, medical clinics and water wells — what seem to be little for us — they have accomplished a lot for the simple village people, who are struggling to survive on a daily basis. Unfortunately, despite NATO's enormous efforts to reconstruct the country, the international coalition forces have failed to win the hearts and minds of the people.

Opium in Afghanistan

Around 200 million people in the world — close to five per cent of the global population — abuse illicit drugs. Of them 16 million abuse opium and heroin.⁽⁷⁶⁾ Until the seventies, the Golden Triangle, consisting of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand, were the world's highest opium producers. During the Flower Power years in Europe, the hippies travelled to Afghanistan just to smoke marijuana, and it was not until the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1979 that heroin was commercialized as merchandise to fund the mujahideen in the military campaign in Afghanistan from 1979 until 1989. By the time the Soviets left, the seven major mujahideen groups alone were responsible for producing twice the national annual production of both Pakistan and Iran combined — 800 metric tonnes — in 1989. They were effectively meeting 70 per cent of the world's heroin supply.⁽⁷⁷⁾

As the war had destroyed the nomadic way of life of many Afghans and also water irrigation systems to grow viable crops, opium was often the only way of survival for many Afghan farmers. Moreover, opium could easily buy weapons and weapons contributed to the ongoing armed conflict after the Soviets left. At present, Afghanistan produces more than 90 per cent of the world's opium.⁽⁷⁸⁾

According to the British government, illicit drug trade poses the “gravest threat to the long-term security,

development, and effective governance of Afghanistan”, particularly since the Taliban are believed to be the biggest beneficiary of drug sales.

Yet it is often the only source of income and the only way of survival for many farmers and rapidly eradicating poppy fields may not be a solution to the problem. Moreover, every time a poppy field is destroyed, a poor person becomes poorer and is more likely to support the Taliban against the Western forces who destroyed his crops.⁽⁷⁹⁾ Poor farmers whose poppy crop has been eradicated several times still plan to cultivate poppies in the next season; in particular as it is the only means to service their debts and gain access to land for farming.⁽⁸⁰⁾ Without alternative livelihoods already in place, premature eradication damages the environment for rural development.⁽⁸¹⁾

Therefore, as long as there is no alternative livelihood that can replace the poppy crop, eradication should not be carried out.

Thailand and Pakistan succeeded in eliminating opium production but with a gradual approach that took decades rather than months or years.⁽⁸²⁾

Conclusion

The international community and the Afghan government have made immense efforts to bring durable peace and stability back to war-torn Afghanistan. However, lack of reconstruction and development has created dissatisfaction among the Afghans, who increasingly have been supporting different elements of the Taliban. Moreover, Pushtun domination has always been present in Afghanistan. Their exclusion from power has also contributed to discontent. Therefore, the Taliban should be included in peace negotiations to obtain stability in Afghanistan.

In order to gain durable peace and stability in Afghanistan, it is essential to win the hearts and minds of the

Afghans. The ISAF/NATO forces have been deployed to assist in the reconstruction of the country. However, instead they have become more engaged in warfare than in reconstruction programmes.

Even if ISAF/NATO forces change their approach to their initial objective the war may not be won as the Afghans have lost trust in the international coalition forces that they regard more as Christian aggressors rather than peacekeepers. Moreover, Islam is part of the Afghan culture and in order to win over the hearts and minds, it may be important to include troops from Muslim countries who may connect more easily with the local villagers and make the presence of international troops acceptable.

The international community in Afghanistan is supposed to help in reconstruction and development, however, in order to accomplish this mission, it is necessary to give greater authority to President Hamid Karzai who knows which priorities need to be focused on.

Women's participation within the Afghan society has always been closely linked to cultural and religious norms and for women to participate it is essential that women's development remains within the cultural norms and values of the Afghan traditions. Going beyond these norms and values may only be counterproductive for Afghan women to progress in the society.

Warlordism has been a typical Afghan phenomenon. Throughout history armed warlords have always been in greater control of the country and this phenomenon cannot be eradicated within a short period of time. The central government should include warlords in peace negotiations, give them recognition and economic benefits to disarm them.

If no action is taken against the growth of illicit opium, to bringing stability back to Afghanistan will remain a difficult task to accomplish as warlords, drug lords, Taliban elements and even government officials are involved in the trafficking of drugs. However, opium is often the only profitable crop for farmers to survive. In order to fight the

battle against opium production, economic development, alternative viable crops and stability are the main ingredients to slowly eradicate the poppy fields.

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Afghanistan's Quandary: Significance of Regional States

Arshi Saleem Hashmi

Introduction

Chinese Philosopher Sun Tzu wrote long ago "All war is based on deception." To date, the war in Afghanistan has deceived only the poor Afghan people.

It is said that the transformation of Afghanistan from policy success to failure stems from two related causes: an overestimation of Soviet power during the Cold War and an underestimation of US interests after the Soviets withdrew. Washington, assuming that the Soviet Union would ultimately prevail after they invaded the country in 1979, began its support for the Afghan mujahideen. The United States sought to bleed the Soviets, forcing them to pay a heavy price for their aggression. To this end, the United States aided radical fundamentalists along with more traditional forces and encouraged Arab and Islamic states to support their own anti-Soviet proxies, and the rest, as they say, is history.

It is unfortunate that for many years, wrong policies and short sighted meddling in Afghan affairs has

complicated prospects of a peace settlement and has led to continued war and instability. If on the one hand, Taliban managed to defeat their foes with Pakistani help, on the other hand, the readiness of Iran, Russia, India and other states to aid Taliban foes has intensified the turmoil and further contributed to the instability of the country and the region.

The study specifically deals with the situation in Afghanistan and regional actors after the US attack and removal of Taliban regime. Though any discourse on Afghanistan is incomplete without discussing the historical role of the neighbours and other powers in Afghan affairs, I have deliberately restricted my study to the current situation, which has significantly changed the dynamics of the relations of the neighbouring countries vis-à-vis Afghanistan.

The study also investigates the stakes and changing parameters of engagement for countries bordering Afghanistan as well as non-contiguous Russia and India. The paper raises the question why it is important to have the neighbours engage with Afghanistan and what are the factors that will bring peace in Afghanistan and the region. The study concludes that the destinies of the regional states are intertwined and any policy that intensifies the clash of interest would harm peace and stability in the region.

Afghanistan since 2002

A two-decade-long civil war, which began as an insurgency against the former communist-led government in Kabul, led to the emergence of the Taliban as the leading power in Afghanistan. The Taliban were regarded by some as the bearers of peace and the saviours of Afghan sovereignty. However, the rise of this largely rural, Pushtun-dominated Islamic fundamentalist movement provoked wider fears of regional conflict and instability. Neighbouring countries were apprehensive Taliban rule in Afghanistan would lead to a persistent pattern of border clashes, narcotics traffic, terrorism, and the rekindling of ethnic and sectarian

tensions throughout the region. Afghanistan under Taliban posed an enormous challenge to an international community distracted by other priorities and lacking effective policy options for containing the dangerous spill-over of Afghanistan's political, military, and social upheaval into neighbouring states.

The US attack on Afghanistan on the pretext that al-Qaeda chief, Osama bin Laden, who was allegedly involved in the 9/11 attacks in the US, was being provided hospitality by the Taliban, led to the forcible removal of the Taliban regime with which began yet another era of war and political instability in Afghanistan and the region.

US presence clearly disturbs the power equation in the region and makes it difficult for regional players to set the future course of their relations or policies in the regional context. As it is, the interests of most of the states are at odds with one another. On the one hand, there is Russia, once a superpower and rival of the US, which is determined to maintain its dominance in this region. On the other hand, China is also gradually building up its influence both in political and economic terms. India enjoys dominance in South Asia and is a close ally of both Russia and the US. Moreover, with its all-time support to the Northern Alliance, India has played the role of a traditional ally of Afghanistan. Russia and China are on friendly terms with each other but with the US they have diverse equations. As for China, the long-term presence of the US in the region does not bode well for the country's economic and strategic interests in the region. It is also believed that one of the US grand strategy's objective in the region is to counter the growing influence of China in South Asia as well as its bid to seek access to West Asia.

Another important feature of the imbalance in the power equation in this region is '*trilateralism*.'⁽¹⁾ The growing trilateral relations — Russia-India-Afghanistan, China-Russia-Afghanistan, Iran-Russia-India, US-Afghanistan-India, US-Afghanistan-Pakistan — indeed

present a complex situation which, in view of the US presence and its grand strategy, may negatively affect bilateral relations between these states. Moreover, the US, through its influence and the kind of relationships it enjoys, especially with India and Afghanistan, may manipulate the regional economic and security alliances, especially the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and SAARC.

Economic indicators of Afghanistan and the regional states:(2)

Regional States: Statistics

	Population (in mil.)	Population Growth Rate (%)	GDP Growth Rate (%)	GDP Per Capita (US\$)	Exports to region (mil. US\$)	Below Poverty Line (%)	Literacy (%)	Political Stability Index
Afghanistan	28	2.67	8	300	1,003	53	36	3.4
Pakistan	152	2.09	7.8	632	5,149	40	49	6.3
Iran	67	1.10	4.8	2,431	10,308	32	77	19.9
Tajikistan	6	2.19	8.0	323	666	64	90	13.1
Uzbekistan	26	1.70	7.2	461	1,389	28	91	9.7
Turkmenistan	5	1.83	11.0	1,251	13,727	58	93	18.9
China	1,269	0.59	9.3	1,272	22,561	10	90	46.6
India	1,080	1.38	7.6	638	12,694	25	61	24.3
Russia	143	-0.37	5.9	4,078	15,669	18	95	21.8

Courtesy: Weinbaum, USIP Report, June 2006

Countries which share borders with Afghanistan and India and Russia have the gravest cause for concern about the latest paroxysms of their neighbour. Only one of the six, Iran, has any cause for satisfaction: The Shia ayatollahs in Tehran have a profound loathing of the Taliban's Sunni mullahs. But even Iran will not be happy with an Afghan government based on Northern Alliance and the warlords which promises little hope of stability — and scant chance of an end to the colossal refugee problem across Afghanistan's long western frontier. Tehran also views with near-paranoid

suspicion any western involvement in the affairs of the region.

So too is Pakistan, which of all Afghanistan's neighbours has the most to lose from recent events. Indeed, it has already seen the collapse of its greatest strategic dream: a zone of influence in central Asia based on close ties with Kabul.

Pakistan's efforts to address the crisis on its western border have earned both warm praise (1979-89) and harsh criticism (1995-to date) from the US and other countries. Not only that. Pakistan had to face a new civil war on its doorstep, the Pushtun minority fighting against the Uzbeks, Tajiks, and other ethnic groups which largely make up the Northern Alliance.

One of the effects of the American military intervention was to tilt the balance of ethno-political power away from the majority Pushtuns in Afghanistan. With the dislodging of the Taliban, most of whom were Pushtun, it is effectively no longer a "Pushtun state." This has been difficult for the Pushtuns to accept. However, even when the Taliban were in power, a minority opinion held that Taliban rule could not last because the Pushtuns were not a homogenous community. The Pushtuns are divided internally, along regional, ideological, and leadership lines. Indeed, the Taliban were described as a "warring alliance"—an alliance of ideologues at the centre with tribal chiefs, traders, and other actors who perceived that their interests at that point in time lay in supporting the Taliban.

Intra-Pushtun divisions continue now as in the past. For example, there are major differences between the East and South that impact Pushtun strategy. Had they been more united and arrived at a consensus about what they felt was their rightful role, Pushtuns might have been able to play a more pro-active role in the Bonn process than they did.

President Musharraf's turnabout on the Taliban in 2001 and his regime's strategic partnership with the United States on counter-terrorism seem to be a defining moment in

Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan. Islamabad in the post-9/11 aftermath had to give up the idea that it can install Afghan leaders of its choice and dictate foreign policy to Kabul.

Iran, which like Pakistan gained influence in Afghanistan because of the struggle against the Soviets, was opposed to both the Taliban and to growing Pakistani influence. To maintain influence in Afghanistan, Iran tried to organize and unite Afghanistan's Shi'a population. Afghanistan's Shi'as, however, are only lukewarm in their support for Iran and often resent Tehran's meddling.

Many Taliban leaders regard Afghanistan's Shi'a, and the Iranian regime that champions their cause, as apostates. Thus, as the Taliban consolidated control in Shi'a areas, they ruthlessly tried to suppress Shia'ism and regularly discriminated against Shi'as. In part because of this abuse, Iran has worked closely with other anti-Taliban forces in an attempt to stop the Taliban's consolidation of power and even massed troops along Afghanistan's border.

From an Iranian point of view, serious strategic issues are on the table. Many Iranians believe that, at least until recently, the Taliban were indirectly supported by the United States, with direct support from Pakistan and economic backing from Saudi Arabia. They perceive the support of the Taliban to be part of a strategy of surrounding Iran with aggressive Sunni states. In addition, Iran has the world's second-largest reserves of natural gas but is presently exporting virtually none of it. Iran feels it has been stabbed in the back by an American policy working to ensure that Iran does not become one of the routes for the oil and gas resources of the Caspian.

Iran feels threatened from a sense of encirclement from the US military forces in the Gulf, the Saudi air force, the Turkish air force, and the Israeli air force due to its nuclear programme. The recent security climate bolsters groups within Iran who argue for a strong missile and nuclear programme.

On the other side of Afghanistan is the country's biggest neighbour, China, with the shortest shared border (about 70km). Even mighty China is deeply concerned about the possible effect of continued conflict on its own sizeable and restive Muslim minority.

To the north of Afghanistan are three former Soviet republics, each with close ethnic ties to Afghanistan. All three - Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have sizeable Islamist movements taking their cue from the Taliban. The removal of the Taliban from power was therefore a relief for the ruling regimes of these Central Asian states, but the prospect of a new phase of civil war was undoubtedly unsettling. Uzbekistan, which has done the most to aid the US campaign in Afghanistan, is the most susceptible to Islamist retaliation.

All three republics have enormous economic problems, and look to Washington for aid to reward their support. They strongly believe that their security interests are directly threatened by Afghanistan's civil war. As a region, the Central Asian states are threatened by drug trafficking, the narrowing of financial and security options, and the potential rise of anti-regime Islamic movements. As individual states, they face threats ranging from the migration of refugee populations to direct security threats and ongoing civil war.

The missing factor

Positive role of the regional states

One of the very few positive things that had happened between Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries was the initiative to consolidate regional peace and security and to evolve a friendly neighbourhood. All the seven neighbouring countries of Afghanistan signed a non-intervention pact on 22 December 2002 in Kabul.⁽³⁾ They pledged never to interfere in the affairs of that war-ravaged

country. The agreement emphasized constructive and amicable relations, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. The states made a commitment to refrain from actions that could jeopardize peace and security. It was a momentous step, reflecting the willingness of these states to move towards harmonization of relations and regional integrity.

But despite the pact, more than five years down the line, the region is still prone to conflicts and these states lack the “will” to address common regional issues, challenges and threats. The region, unfortunately, has a situation where sometimes neighbours, rather than being good neighbours, tend to see opportunities in increasing difficulties there. Ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan have sharply deteriorated in the past year and a half, largely over Afghan complaints that Islamabad was not doing enough to stop resurgent Taliban operating in Pakistan. It is not that no initiatives have been taken by the regional countries to ensure peace and stability but as it turned out, national interests superseded regional benefits and that has affected almost the entire region badly.

Good neighbourly relations

The Declaration which was signed in December 2002 by the representatives of Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, commits the signatories to the principles of territorial integrity, mutual respect, friendly relations, and cooperation and mutual non-interference.

Regional economic cooperation

Regional economic cooperation was given another boost at a conference held in Kabul in December 2005. The Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation was jointly co-chaired by Afghanistan and the UK (in its capacity as G8 chair).

Importance of positive engagement

Any attempted solutions to the problems in Afghanistan that fail to account for or take into consideration the ground realities in Afghanistan are doomed to fail. At the end of the day, it will not be the origin or the source of the proposed solution that would matter, but its acceptability, success and survivability on ground in Afghanistan. Afghanistan and the region can enjoy the fruits of prosperity and development provided some realities are properly acknowledged by the states in the region. Ignorance of such realities can cause complications leading to further conflicts instead of solutions. For instance:

Geo-physical realities

The key component which shapes Afghanistan's relationship with its neighbours and their relationship with Afghanistan is the fact that Afghanistan, with a total area of 647,000 sq km and a 5,529 km long border, is a landlocked country. This is the critical feature of Afghanistan's geo-political predicament. It is a strategic handicap for Afghanistan that inhibits its ability to exercise sovereign independence as it otherwise would.

Adding to its geo-political predicament are the six neighbours that border Afghanistan. Pakistan and Iran have a coastline connected to the high seas and, resultantly, the international shipping routes. The other three — Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan — are themselves landlocked. Turkmenistan has a coastline but with the Caspian Sea, which itself is landlocked. Therefore, if Afghanistan is to trade at an economically cost-effective level, it must depend upon either Pakistan or Iran because sea trade - as opposed to trade via land or air - is the most economical. It is safe to assume that any government that is hostile or even unfriendly to both Iran and Pakistan cannot survive in Afghanistan for any significant duration of time. It

may be hostile to one of these countries, perhaps, but not to both.

Religious realities

Afghanistan's population is 99 per cent Muslim. It has a deeply engrained relationship with Islam and the Muslim world. No non-Muslim country, can have the kind of emotional or religious attachment with Afghanistan as Pakistan or the rest of the Central Asian Muslim countries have. Therefore, Afghanistan's role must be seen in its Islamic geo-political and strategic perspective.

Demographic realities

The demographic realities, in the context of Afghanistan, are determined by two components, (i) sectarian and (ii) ethnic. Eighty per cent of the Afghan Muslim population is Sunni, while approximately 20 per cent are Shia.⁽⁴⁾ That's why Iran has not been able to have much influence in Afghanistan. So flawed was this Iranian policy that it put Iran and Pakistan at conflicting positions in Afghanistan. It also deprived both countries of the fruits of a close security alliance and economic cooperation, which would have been greatly beneficial to both the countries, particularly in the agricultural, industrial, technological and defence fields.

As for the ethnic component, Afghanistan has an ethnic composition that is 40 per cent Pushtun, 25 per cent Tajik, 18 per cent Hazara, 6 per cent Uzbek and 11 per cent comprised of minor ethnic groups such as Aimaks, Turkmen, Baloch, and others.⁽⁵⁾

Economic realities

Afghanistan, being landlocked, has to depend on either Pakistan or Iran for trade and commerce. (i) The geo-physical leaning of Afghanistan is towards Pakistan. The market for the vast oil and gas reserves of Central Asia lies

in Pakistan and India. It is in the economic interest of countries like Turkmenistan that they sell their oil and gas to Pakistan and India. For this they would have to pass their pipelines through Afghanistan. If any government in Kabul wants to benefit from transit fees and royalties, it must maintain good relations with Pakistan. Further, the passage to India lies through Pakistan. The fact is that Pakistan is the leading external player in Afghanistan. It would be difficult for any government in Kabul to survive without co-operation and friendly relations with Pakistan.

Obstacle to peace

Neighbours' interference: Perception or reality?

The existing scenario in Afghanistan, and the power combination in the South-Central Asian region, poses various security challenges to its immediate neighbours – Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Pakistan for example, has always seen Afghanistan as a source of strategic depth against India.⁽⁶⁾ It has sought to protect its western border through a Pushtun-dominated government in Kabul which would be friendly to Pakistan because of its significant Pushtun population.

Pakistan has paid a heavy price for its support to Afghanistan. In the US-led war against terrorism it provided all possible assistance to the US, including military bases in the country. The presence of foreign troops was widely condemned inside the country, as it was believed to be a threat to the state's security and sovereignty. Now the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have gradually been improving but there still exists an element of uncertainty as the security situation along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border remains fragile.

Iran has been equally pursuing a similar quest for strategic depth on its eastern border and its bid to link up to Central Asia by supporting Afghanistan. Right after the

Karzai interim government was sworn in, Iran was in the forefront of pledging to spare no effort in working for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Later, on different occasions, Iran expressed full support to Afghanistan in achieving economic stability through agricultural development and finding a viable alternative to poppy cultivation, the most important concern of the two neighbours.⁽⁷⁾

The fact that the Iranian government had used all means at its disposal to oppose the Taliban regime, well before the international community became worried about the presence of terrorist groups in Afghanistan, and helped it to set the course of its relations with the new Afghan government, but from the point of view of security, both Iran and Russia had common worries about the possibility of the US obtaining a bigger foothold and establish permanent bases in Central Asian states like Uzbekistan and Afghanistan itself. Russia and Iran enjoy cordial relations and Russia is supporting Iran in the defence field. The US is gravely concerned about Iran's military build up and nuclear policy, which Iran continues to pursue as a sovereign state. The US-Iran antagonistic relationship is a threat to regional stability.

Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbours strongly believe that their security interests are threatened by the instability and fragile peace in that country.⁽⁸⁾ As a region, the Central Asian states are threatened by the narrowing of financial and security options and the potential rise of extremism. Hence, the Central Asian countries, keeping in view the military and security cooperation issues, although keen to leave the door open for further Western assistance, appear more comfortable in dealing with Russia. The presence of the US in the region is worrisome for these states. The war against terrorism brought in external military forces into the region. The introduction of foreign coalition troops in two of Afghanistan's neighbouring Central Asian states – Uzbekistan and Tajikistan – upset the local power balance amongst all these states. Moreover given the delicate

balance obtaining in Central Asia in close proximity to Iran and China, the entry of the US military here is a threatening prospect.

Non-traditional security areas

Apart from the conventional security issues, another cause of concern for the near and distant neighbours of Afghanistan is unconventional security problems emanating mainly from the post-9/11 developments in the country. If the conventional threat to regional stability is the presence of the US, the unconventional security problems are not a lesser challenge.

Major areas where the regional states through cooperation can be a source of stability rather than being the cause of trouble for each other are:

Militancy and religious radicalism

Robert Kemp writing in BC journal about the militancy in Pushtun areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan states, “The rise of radical Islam along both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border has its roots in three major factors. The first is the disintegration of Afghan social structures at both the state and tribal levels, beginning in 1979 with revolts against the communist government and the subsequent Soviet invasion. The second is the increased sway of political Islam, due mostly to outside influences, including Salafist thought from the Middle East, and the more local Deobandi philosophy. The third is the radicalization of the Pushtuns, the dominant ethnic group along the border.”⁽⁹⁾ He also believes that following Afghan tradition, Mullah or Imam of the mosque took the responsibility of a *Mujahid* when war knocked on the door. The intensity and continuation of the war strengthened the role of the Mullah in the war and later in the society. The war destroyed the education system that was already not stable paving way for the madrasas in Pakistan to provide

food, shelter and religious education to refugee Afghan children.

The political and security situation in the Pushtun areas lying along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan will have far reaching implications on the future of both countries and for the entire region.

Narcotics

The sheer size and illicit nature of the opium economy mean that it infiltrates and seriously affects Afghanistan's economy, state, society, and politics. The opium economy is a massive source of corruption and gravely undermines the credibility of the government and its local representatives as well as constituting a problem for the neighbouring countries in the region. The UNODC estimates 60 percent of Afghanistan's opium is trafficked across Iran's border (much of it in transit to Europe). According to the country's police chief, as reported by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/R), seizures of the narcotic stuff by Iranian authorities in the first half of this year are up 29 per cent from the same period last year. Experts say the rise in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan will have some effect on Iran's opium prices but not a significant one.⁽¹⁰⁾ According to the 2001 Bonn Agreement, which laid out Afghanistan's postwar reconstruction plan, Britain was put in charge of opium eradication. In addition, the United States has provided the Afghan government with public-information campaigns, \$135 million per year in financial aid for farmers to grow alternative crops, and technical assistance with eradication programmes.⁽¹¹⁾ A new report by the Senlis Council, a Europe-based think tank, cautions against mixing counter-narcotics campaigns with military counter-terrorism operations. The report finds that poverty drives Afghan farmers to cultivate poppies. "By focusing aid funds away from development and poverty relief, failed counter-narcotics policies have hijacked the international

community's nation-building efforts and undermined Afghanistan's democratically elected government," the report concludes.⁽¹²⁾ US eradication efforts have increased scepticism among local Afghans of Kabul's ability to administer and provide poverty relief for its far-flung provinces and driven many Afghans to support the Taliban. It is often observed that the factors that lead to production of opium are very much structural, institutional and cultural, and states that are involved in production of plant-based drugs are those with deep unresolved social problems, having no control of their territories and vulnerable borders with neighbours.

Refugee problem

The regional implications of the Afghan crisis consist of a huge influx of refugees from Afghanistan, continued threats and retaliation from Islamic militant groups both inside and outside the region, and increased tensions among the Central Asian states. The refugee crisis imposes a significant economic burden on the states, adding to the already immense economic problems that these countries face. The political dangers of an influx of refugees from Afghanistan into Central Asia are huge, for example, many of these refugees may themselves be members of militant Islamic groups, seeking temporary refuge from the war in Afghanistan. Others may become ardent supporters if treated poorly and corralled into refugee camps indefinitely with no hope of future opportunities. There is strong historical precedent for refugee camps themselves to serve as breeding grounds for radicalism and if not hardcore militants, the refugees often become a medium to carry out certain task out of economic need or emotional attachment to the cause.

Access to small arms

The small arms proliferation and drug smuggling are also threatening the South and Central Asian societies, which

has augmented due to Afghan crisis. Presently, there is a clear linkage between narcotics trade and weapons, which are used both to protect the drugs and bring drug profit and become a source of income for various militant groups. Furthermore, the availability of small arms, accessed through different routes and sources has changed the nature of conflict in South Asia. In this way, the regional actors have failed to maintain peace in Afghanistan; on the contrary, small arms proliferation has contributed to the escalation of regional conflicts and low intensity wars in the region. Afghanistan has one of the highest concentrations of guns per person in the world. There may be up to 10 million small arms circulating in a country which has a population of 23 million. The culture of the gun has become deeply embedded, and the presence of firearms has a fundamental impact on democracy, development, and security.⁽¹³⁾ Available data and other reports received by Amnesty International indicate that the current estimated total for all Afghan security forces (police, army and security service) is 182,000 personnel, while the number of small arms known to be imported and redistributed since 2002 amounts to 409,022. These add to the millions of small arms already possessed by individuals and armed groups in Afghanistan.⁽¹⁴⁾

It is an open secret now that regional as well as extra-regional regimes contributed for various reasons, in arming Afghanistan's warring sides in the past; it is their responsibility now to ensure that arms supplies do not fall into the hands of the militants. To do that, governments should agree to a new international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).⁽¹⁵⁾ The international community has focussed on security sector reform (SSR) in Afghanistan. However, continuing arms proliferation and abuse has especially undermined two specific areas of Security Sector Reform: efforts at disarmament and improving services of the Afghan National Police (ANP). A US government report, published in November 2006, on the progress made in ANP training

noted that the obstacles to establishing a fully professional police service were formidable, citing evidence of pervasive corruption, poor accountability systems to detect and prevent fraud, waste and corruption and inadequate systems to manage the secure storage, movement and distribution of weapons, munitions and military equipment. In his report of 6 March 2008 to the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon notes that ANP reform initiatives have been slow to take effect, corruption remains a significant problem and fiscal, personnel, material and weapons accountability processes remain unreliable.⁽¹⁶⁾

Risk of losing energy resources

Afghanistan is a strategic 'energy bridge' from Central Asia to South Asia. Mr. Foster's report, based on a presentation he delivered to the Group of 78, a Canadian peace organization, in Ottawa on Jan 29, 2008,⁽¹⁷⁾ identifies Afghanistan as a strategic "energy bridge" for the transport of natural gas from Central Asia to South Asia. He writes that there is a geopolitical "rivalry," or a "New Great Game" for energy resources in the region, which began after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, and involves controlling the flows of energy resources north to Russia, west to Europe, east to China, and south through Afghanistan. Turkmenistan, for instance, has the world's fourth largest natural gas reserves, and Kazakhstan has the largest oil reserves in Central Asia. Mr. Foster's report says that the US supported a consortium led by American company Unocal to move natural gas through Afghanistan, and negotiated with the Taliban to do so between 1997 to August 2001. The project, called the TAPI pipeline, takes its name from the countries involved, namely Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, and is proposed to pass through the Helmand and Kandahar provinces of Afghanistan, now two of the most unstable areas of the country. Mr. Foster stated that the Bush administration saw

the Taliban regime as a source of stability for the proposed pipeline. It demanded that the Taliban form a government of national unity. However, the US negotiations with the Taliban failed in August 2001, just before the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in New York. As a result, the US ousted the Taliban, with the assistance of the Northern tribes. The American influence is opposed by Russia because it could mean a failure for Russian designs on a "strategic triangle" between Russia, India and China. The pipeline has significant potential as Afghanistan's largest development project. It could also help meet the energy needs of India and Pakistan, spurring economic cooperation between the rival countries.⁽¹⁸⁾

‘Regional’ solution

Afghanistan’s recent history clearly demonstrates that the regional context and external involvement can make or break peace-building processes. In recent years, internal and external divisions have interacted to increase tensions both inside Afghanistan and in the wider region. It is therefore in the particular interest of regional states to stabilize the tensions within the area and develop joint approaches towards Afghanistan that can secure a more lasting peace. The Afghan reconstruction process thus offers opportunities for initiatives that might strengthen the forces of peace and cooperation in the region, rather than fuelling intra-regional conflict as has often been the case in the past.

The Central Asian republics, India, Iran, China, Russia, the United States, and Pakistan all have a stake in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan that does not infuse instability and violence beyond its borders. They can achieve this goal, however, only if they are prepared to make stability their top priority, and eschew some of the ambitious goals for influence in Afghanistan that have put them at odds in the past.

For Russia and China, the demise of Taliban rule represented a welcome reduction in the scope of militant Islam. However, both have mixed feelings about the implications of a longer term US presence in Pakistan and Central Asia. The same is true of Iran and to a lesser extent India. In addition, Iran will look on the role of the predominantly Shi'a Hazaras as an important indicator. India will be looking for signs that militants active in Kashmir are coming back to Afghanistan. Each of these countries is capable of affecting the balance of power within Afghanistan. A relatively successful outcome depends on the willingness of all to put stability ahead of their other goals.

The most important potential tool for stabilizing Afghanistan's relations with its neighbours is Central Asian energy, which benefits no one unless it can be transported to markets outside the region. US policy opposes building a pipeline through Iran, and has supported building one from the Caucasus to the Mediterranean. China and India are the two fastest-growing energy markets, and both are interested in access to Central Asian gas. A pipeline across Afghanistan into the subcontinent would represent a tremendous opportunity to bring in construction jobs, transit fees, and some energy into Afghanistan. It would also unite its neighbours in a common interest. Once again, the critical prerequisite is security.

Intertwined destinies

ECO, SAARC, SCO and now TAPI: Are we going for better cooperation?

Afghanistan's neighbours have an important role to play in helping Afghanistan build a more stable and secure future. The threats of violent extremism and narcotics are not Afghanistan's alone. The region stands to benefit when these threats are dealt with effectively. To help foster a long-term regional approach to security challenges and cooperation, it

is the need of the hour to have constructive engagement of Afghanistan's neighbours to act resolutely in support of the efforts to build a stable Afghanistan with secure borders. It is particularly important to engage Pakistan, with emphasis to improve security and stability along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border, and, to encourage further cooperation and intensified dialogue between the two neighbours through the Jirga mechanisms, the Ankara process and the Tripartite Commission.

Regional cooperation is not really a new idea for Afghanistan or other countries for that matter. ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) was one such initiative taken in 1985 by Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. It was one of the very first steps towards regionalism that brought together Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey. Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia have since joined. ECO has the potential to work as a bridge for economic cooperation specifically between the 10 ECO nations together.

Similarly, in post 9/11 South Asia, Afghanistan's request to join SAARC was finally accepted and Afghanistan became the eighth member of the SAARC in 2007 at the 14th SAARC annual summit in New Delhi⁽¹⁹⁾. Though Afghanistan was already a member of groups such as the Economic Cooperation Organization and Organization of Islamic Conference, SAARC is the first bloc of contiguous countries to which it has been admitted.

China and Iran as observer would deepen the tie between the ten countries in the region. Besides ending its isolation and beginning a process of regional integration, Afghanistan's SAARC entry can translate into several tangible advantages for the bloc.

Afghanistan's SAARC membership could mean a major energy gain for the bloc. Though South Asia's energy needs are growing exponentially, there is little energy trade within the region or with energy-rich Central and West Asia. Afghanistan could become the key transit for energy,

providing a route for imports of hydropower from Central Asia and gas from Central Asia and Iran.

However, the very fact that the member countries are now willing to sit and talk is regarded as a big step forward. As the World Bank sees it, "SAARC could play a major role in helping build mutual trust, develop regional institutions and physical infrastructure, and partner with development organizations."⁽²⁰⁾ Other blocs like ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) and the EU are interested in interacting with SAARC.

Energy cooperation is an important area which can do wonders if materialized. The Trade and Economics database⁽²¹⁾ describes IPI pipeline deal in these words, "The exportation of natural gas from Iran to India through Pakistan is a venture which may change the face of regional politics in South Asia. It is a study in how economic collaboration possesses the power to engender as well as transform social and political discourse between countries. The Indian government speculated whether Pakistan could guarantee security for the flow of natural gas in the pipeline. Furthermore, Pakistan's collaboration with Iran may foster conflict resolution as well". Obviously such initiative involving Iran did not go well in US books and instead TAPI or Trans-Afghanistan Pakistan and India Pipeline (TAPI) was proposed with US backing. It proposes natural gas pipeline being developed by the Asian Development Bank. The pipeline will transport Caspian Sea natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan and then to India. From there TAPI will be constructed alongside the highway running from Herat to Kandahar, and then via Quetta and Multan in Pakistan. The final destination of the pipeline will be the Indian town of Fazilka, near the border between Pakistan and India.

The new deal on the pipeline was signed on 27 December 2002 by the leaders of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan; and in 2005, the Asian Development Bank submitted the final version of a feasibility study designed by

British company Penspen. Since the United States military overthrew the Taliban government, the project has practically stalled.

Similarly, the SCO or Shanghai Cooperation Organization is another platform that draws the attention towards intra-regional cooperation in economic and socio-political areas. SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group, which was established in November 2005, works to help Afghanistan for reconstruction. Afghanistan is naturally positioned to provide transit routes to three most important regions and thus holds significance not only for regional states but also for extra-regional states. In an optimistic view, due to this geo-strategic distinction of Afghanistan, the future prospects for increased economic cooperation are brighter.

Conclusion

The strategic approaches to Afghanistan by its neighbours have always been subjected to readjustment. No regional state was prepared to allow another to gain a preponderance of influence in Afghanistan. Moreover, each state retained links to client networks that were capable of fractionalizing and incapacitating an emerging Afghanistan. States in the neighbourhood may well sponsor destabilizing forces in the event that Kabul governments fail over time to extend their authority and tangibly improve people's lives, or should Afghanistan's international benefactors lose their patience and interest. In the near perspective, political currents in several regional countries may be overtaking the economic forces on which more optimistic projections for regional cooperation have been based. Poorly considered policies by international aid givers and the Kabul government have in some cases helped to increase suspicions and tensions with neighbours.

The growing *trilateralism* in the region tends to create power centres rather than promoting multilateral strategies or activities. The increasing interconnectedness of

the world demands collective measures to ensure stability at both the state and regional level in order to ensure global security. The prevailing political and economic trends in the region are in contrast with the international trends hampering overall regional progress. Though Afghanistan is now said to be on the road to democracy, the existing situation both within and outside the country does not seem promising for regional peace and security in the near future.

Another important factor regional states need to work on is the radicalism and militancy in Afghanistan, Pakistan and some of the Central Asian countries, which have complex local roots beyond the ideological and geopolitical factors, which include more mundane issues such as poverty, unemployment, poor education, and ethnic differences. At the same time, the deep cultural traditions of the border areas are colliding daily with the modern world. Radio, television, the internet, cell phones, DVDs, new roads, and returned refugees are bringing new ideas and new customs to what had been a very conservative, traditional, somewhat homogenous culture. This may reflect the struggle ongoing within the larger world of Islam, as values and beliefs clash with an increasingly global culture and morality. The people of these areas will eventually decide for themselves how to proceed, in spite of outside influences pushing for more radical forms of Islam. This will be a long process, and one the Western world has only a limited ability to alter.

Afghanistan occupies a vital geo-strategic position, near such critical but unstable regions as the Persian Gulf and the Indo-Pakistani border. Indeed, the importance of Afghanistan may grow in the coming years, as Central Asia's oil and gas reserves, which are estimated to rival those of the North Sea, begin to play a major role in the world energy market. Afghanistan could prove a valuable corridor for this energy as well as for access to markets in Central Asia. In addition, Afghanistan can serve as a trade link between Central and South Asia. Unfortunately,

Afghanistan has become an obstacle to the development of this region due to the continuous strife and political stability.

There is an absolute need for “paradigm shift” in the policies of the regional states *vis-a-vis* Afghanistan. Unless those parties interested in saving Afghanistan understand that a regional approach is essential, the stalemate will continue. Bringing in interested parties and neighbours through forums like Shanghai Cooperation Organization (of which Russia and China are key members); SAARC having Afghanistan as member and China as observer can provide the much-needed feeling of togetherness. A regional approach will not bring result over night. But the international community and the concerned regional states must put energy and focus on a regional approach if gains in Afghanistan are to endure.

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The Way Out for Afghanistan: A Chinese Scholar's View

Zhou Rong

Afghanistan still faces hard times

We may start with considering the following facts:

— US National Intelligence Director Michael McConnell says more than six years after the US invaded Afghanistan that the Kabul government under President Hamid Karzai controls just 30 per cent of the country while the resurgent Taliban control 10 to 11 per cent. In fact the majority of the population and most of the territory remains under local tribal control. Right now, towns look deserted due to fighting; the opium crop keeps expanding so fast and so vast that some suggest only a lack of space prevents it getting any bigger, and the Taliban still roam around great swathes of the cultivated “green zone”.

— In 2007, insurgency-related violence in Afghanistan killed more than 6,500 people, including 222 foreign troops. Last year was the deadliest yet since the US-led invasion in

The author would like to make it clear that the views expressed here are his own and do not in any way reflect the policy of the People's Republic of China.

2001. Officials estimate that up to 40 per cent of proceeds from Afghanistan's drug trade — an amount worth tens of millions of dollars — are used to fund the insurgency and suicide attacks.

— Several reports by nongovernmental groups find that insurgent violence has surged in the first months of this year to a level as high as or higher than it was during the same period last year. There were 704 insurgent attacks from January through March this year, compared with 424 during the first three months of 2007, one report says. At least 463 civilians have been killed in the first quarter of this year, according to the report, compared with 264 in the first quarter of last year. The figure of 16 attacks on aid organizations in the first quarter of 2008 that the report attributes to insurgents is double the number in the same period in 2007. There also have been increases over last year in the numbers of aid workers killed, wounded and abducted, Afghanistan is slipping towards failure.

The Taliban

The Taliban took control of Afghanistan government in 1996 and ruled until the 2001 US-led invasion drove them from power. The group is known for having provided safe haven to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda as well as for its rigid interpretation of Islamic law. Violent clashes between Taliban and coalition forces have increased sharply in recent months underscoring the Taliban's resurgence. Since their ouster the Taliban are believed to have organized numerous attacks that have killed NGO workers, civilians, government officials, policemen, and Pakistani and Afghan soldiers. The Taliban are in fact an insurgent organization that will periodically resort to terrorism as part of its operations.

Experts say many of the Taliban were able to melt back into predominantly Pushtun areas of Afghanistan in the south and east. They have occasionally linked up with others to mount attacks, and some are working to overthrow the

current government. These fighters have occasionally aligned themselves with al-Qaeda fighters and with the mujahideen led by the anti-government warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. They have more recruits and they have been able to take advantage of the lawlessness, the ubiquitous criminal gangs, and the corruption in the government.

Largely recovered from their initial defeat, the Taliban have been encouraged by the domestic opposition some NATO nations face as they deploy in former Taliban strongholds. Taliban usually fill in an area when the coalition troops withdraw, or they would influence a village or region if US presence is not there. The safe haven in south Afghanistan has allowed them to train, recruit, rest and recuperate and then come back to the battlefield to engage.

Not all former Taliban have joined this fight. Many heeded a call by President Karzai to disarm and have resumed normal lives as common members of society. Some even won seats in the September 2005 parliamentary election. This is not so surprising.

Narco-terrorism

Narco-terrorism refers to terrorist acts carried out by groups that are directly or indirectly involved in cultivating, manufacturing, transporting, or distributing illicit drugs. Narco-terrorist groups would thus be those who use the drug trade to finance their terrorist activities. Some experts think that "while terrorists and drug traffickers often share some short-term goals, they have different long-term objectives (political goals for terrorists, greed for drug lords) and shouldn't be conflated."

In the post-Taliban Afghanistan, opiates continue to be produced both in regions traditionally controlled by the United Front (Badakhshan) and in areas held by various local commanders whose support has been deemed strategically essential to fight the Taliban/al-Qaeda. Even more official

allies of the US "war on terrorism" also seem to be engaged in, or benefiting from, the drug economy.

The war on "narco-terrorism" would then be some kind of a new integrated approach to the security problem that Afghanistan is facing. Yet to favour a largely military approach to a problem, by waging wars, is to address the consequences of a phenomenon rather than its causes. De-linking the opium economy or terrorism from their broader and deeper contexts will only lead to ignoring causal factors and likely to tactical and potentially strategic failure.

In Afghanistan, drug production is closely linked to territorial control and political illegitimacy. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) tracking routes for drugs originating in Afghanistan during 2007 indicates that 30 per cent of the heroin and morphine and 79 per cent of the opium went into Iran. The figures were 51 per cent and 13 per cent for Pakistan and 19 per cent and 7 per cent for the Central Asian Republics, respectively. Opium is widely recognized as a major obstacle to economic development and post-war reconstruction in Afghanistan. It is estimated that Afghanistan currently produces 95 per cent of the world's opium. It is an approximately 4 billion (US) dollar industry that accounts for just over half of the country's total GDP. And, according to *Newsweek*, most of that money goes to traffickers and corrupt officials.

As far as narco-terrorism is concerned, serious evidence is still needed that it does exist in Afghanistan. No doubt some drug money plays a significant role in the ongoing Afghan conflict, even by being used directly against the Afghan government and the international forces; but hard evidence linking al-Qaeda directly to the drug economy is still scarce.

Refugees

The repatriation of Afghan refugees and the bulldozing of their properties in the Jalozai refugee village in

Pakistan started at the beginning of April 2008 according to a previous agreement between the UNHCR and the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The closure of the camp, where some 80,000 refugees lived, was scheduled for September 2007, but aid agencies had sought a six-month suspension in view of the extremely cold winter in Afghanistan. Jalozai was expected to be shut down completely by 15 April, but the process was delayed as some refugees had resisted vacating the camp. The worsening security situation in Afghanistan, lack of job opportunities and limited access to land are among the factors that have increasingly discouraged refugees in Pakistan to repatriate, according to a number of research reports by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the UNHCR. Pakistan currently hosts about 2.4 million Afghans who are allowed to stay there until December 2009. The UNHCR pays up to US\$100 per person to refugees who voluntarily return to Afghanistan — an incentive not available for refugees who prefer relocation inside Pakistan.

Diseases

A recent news report says at least 10 people have died and 130 others are sick in western Afghanistan because of a liver and stomach disease which is widely believed to be caused by contaminated wheat flour, according to Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health." Four out of the 10 deaths were children below 12 years of age, two were women and four were elderly men," Gulam Saeed Rashid, head of the health department in Herat Province, said. Lack of treatment is No 1 reason, for the local doctors had so far been unable to diagnose the disease; they had provided patients only antibiotics and painkillers. "People are frightened and seriously worried about their health and safety," he said.

Main reasons for the disaster

Historical and political reasons

Afghanistan is as much a political mission as it is a combat and reconstruction one. Governed by a foreign power, forced to live within false boundaries among their new "countrymen" they didn't know — and with some with whom they had ages-old conflicts — created a whole new universe of tension among the many ethnic groups. In the end each country became an eclectic stew of societies and peoples who didn't share the same ideology, culture or traditions. And what is the outcome of all this nation creation? Millions of people who don't identify with their country, who don't consider themselves "Afghans, Pakistanis" because those names have no meaning and do not represent their distinct and individual cultures, many of which flow across the false borders. Stabilizing the violence and creating change in the region called for a deeper understanding of the Pushtun. How to make that change? Chasing down the terrorists would not resolve the turmoil in the region, but understanding the distinct cultures within the region will. Working directly with village leaders and community elders will help create trust and create the necessary support from within to make significant change possible.

Terrorist actions have regularly been perpetrated in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban. However, an unbiased look at terrorism in Afghanistan reveals that some of these "terrorist" people or groups once were "freedom fighters" struggling against the Soviets during the 1980s. Not only were they fighting what US president Ronald Reagan had dubbed an "evil empire," they were also, to some extent at least, resorting to the already growing Afghan opium economy. It is common knowledge now that at the time the CIA played a direct role in funnelling weapons and money to the "freedom fighters" — the Afghan mujahideen — as well

as at least an indirect role in the local trade in narcotics. The main difference between then and now is that the mujahideen are no longer a US ally and no longer referred to as "freedom fighters" but as "terrorists." In fact, if the line between "good" and "evil" appears to be rather thin and easily crossed, the line between "resistance" and "terrorism" seems to be even thinner and to be subjectively defined.

Corruption in the local government

Local governance like the effort here has become one of the most pressing issues in Afghanistan, according to Afghans, Western diplomats and NATO and US military officials, and one that could determine the outcome of the still uncertain war. Local governance is the buzzword on everyone's lips, one Afghan development official said, shorthand for extending the government's presence in the provinces, making it perform better and provide much-needed public services. The lack of it is souring people's relations with the government of President Hamid Karzai and raising real concerns about its ability to battle the Taliban insurgents who feed on local dissatisfaction.

In the six years since the fall of the Taliban, the government and foreign aid programmes have no doubt concentrated on reconstruction but otherwise ignored the needs of local people. They never paid attention to relations of the people with the government. This alienation existed all over the country, but had a disastrous effect in many of the provinces in the south and east, where the Taliban were quick to exploit the situation and fill the vacuum. With presidential elections due next year, Karzai is looking ahead to his own re-election, and the reconstruction effort is part of a strategy to secure the vote for him. There is a need also to ensure that the governors are loyal to the president. So budgets, salaries, training and logistic support for the provincial governments will go through a newly set up directorate which reports directly to the president. One

immediate benefit has been streamlined decision-making. For the governors and provincial officials, they now have an office dedicated to their affairs, even if it already seems overloaded.

One specialist commented, "The Taliban, when they say something, they do it, but when Kabul says it will protect people, it often does not." The Taliban still have the edge, he said. People remained "indifferent" to the government, so to engage them, steps were taken to form district councils with representatives from every sizable village. The elders of the province, with the Taliban all around, were, however, reluctant to be seen to be working with the government, one provincial official said. If the community is organized and not indifferent to the government, then they can make it very difficult for the Taliban to come. There are indications that the militants may have adopted a new strategy of avoiding US and NATO forces and staging attacks in provinces that haven't seen major unrest and on easy targets such as aid organizations and the poorly trained Afghan police.

There has been a rapid rise in suicide attacks mimicking those in Iraq. The people in Afghanistan are watching the people in Iraq, the people in Iraq are watching the people elsewhere, and there's a snowball effect. And they work through the Internet, they communicate. The change in methodologies over time has made tracking long-term trends in terrorism very difficult.

The lack of strategic acumen present in the "War on Terror" in Afghanistan is in fact helping the spread of the insurgencies. The United States is the common denominator in Afghanistan. Instead of containing the extremist elements in Afghanistan, US policies have facilitated the expansion of territory that the Taliban have psychological control over. Statistics indicate that the US-led counter-narcotics programme, which focuses primarily on poppy eradication, has been unsuccessful. While America's attention remains focused on Iraq, violence is escalating in Afghanistan, worrying senior US defence officials and commanders who

are struggling to find some 7,000 more American and European troops to combat resurgent Taliban and al-Qaeda forces.

US and NATO at odds

The US has to find a way to create coalitions that rise above the sum of their parts. Working with other countries on what amount to basic organizational issues is ultimately important. Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, during a recent visit to London, publicly expressed scepticism over the conduct of the Afghan war by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. He warned that NATO was "courting disaster".

A majority of America's NATO allies continue to balk at US requests to send thousands more of their troops to Afghanistan. At the same time, the renewed violence in Iraq and the White House decision to suspend further American troop withdrawals from Iraq this summer will make it harder for the Pentagon to send more American forces to Afghanistan next year as President Bush has promised.

Many in the coalition forces are watching the US closely to gauge the extent of its commitment to the Afghanistan mission. The US has plans to send more forces to Afghanistan some time in 2009, something that depends partly on how many troops are brought home from Iraq. Any of these changes would require approval of the NATO alliance.

But a particularly thorny issue is the frequent rotations of commands. The current Canadian commander, for example, will be replaced by a Dutch counterpart by the end of the year. The frequency of change allows the Taliban to exploit the seams of those transitions.

Other assumptive mistakes

More than six years later, the mistake that they persist with in Afghanistan today is in continuing with the

original assumptions, imagining that the Taliban are merely proxies for Osama bin Laden. Instead, as military intelligence officers will tell you, the new Taliban insurgency is a battle not for international jihad, but a struggle by tribes, factions and warlords against an unpopular Afghan government that appeared to have abandoned the largely Pushtun south of the country. While religious ideology, madrasas, training camps and volunteering for al-Qaeda have a role in creating the fanatics to die in large numbers, Taliban commanders in the field, who send young talibs into battle are often local men with local grievances, local pride and local ambitions, Tribal allegiance and the Pushtun code of honour, as well as the simple provocation that foreign troops represent, all play a part in motivating such men. Without the support of the population sometimes tacit and sometimes open and explicit, the Taliban would flap around on dry land.

The way out

Fighting narco-terrorism

However, to overcome both opium production and terrorism in Afghanistan, the government and the international community should focus less on waging wars on drugs and terrorism and more on implementing a broad programme of alternative and integrated development in the whole country. Within this, pursuing a multi-level strategy involving effective check on illicit and criminal activities is critical. Such a programme should be implemented in a progressive way so as to secure sustainable political and territorial stability. Long-lasting peace combined with political as well as economic development must be achieved if Afghanistan is to be rid of its illicit drug economy-war economy nexus. It will be necessary to establish an international force, other than the ISAF, specifically tasked with counter-narcotics operations. And a third axis is

necessary, one which would support the development of substitute crops on a local basis. There are many signs that poppy production can be controlled if there is efficient action on the main issue — the poverty of small farmers. Traditional food crops (wheat, corn, etc.) can offer a viable alternative. The UN World Food Programme has offered to help Afghanistan explore new crops, such as nuts and grapes. Along with new irrigation systems, several nurseries should be renovated to meet the increasing demand for plants. All these initiatives need to be encouraged. Moreover, the international community must promise that its members will purchase the crops.

The world community must not only fight drugs but help the people who can only survive through drugs planting. Let the Afghan people believe that they may lead a better life without drug cultivation.

How to curb terrorism

The newly established government in Islamabad has wasted little time making clear its disapproval of Washington's policy toward Pakistan and its strategy on counter-terrorism. It has also made it clear that it will no longer tolerate the death of civilians in anti-militant operations, and further, it prefers negotiating with militants as a strategy to counter extremism. The deal aims at transforming the lull in suicide bombings into a permanent peace deal with the rebels.

The last thing US should do is alienate the Pakistanis for short-term benefits, killing another top-level extremist leader is probably not worth losing the relationship with Pakistan as a partner. There is a need to be patient and to wait to see how Pakistan's approach to the problem of terrorism works out. If the Afghan government as well as the international coalition can benefit through the experience of Pakistan, the situation in Afghanistan could be expected to improve considerably.

Pipeline blueprints

Let us now discuss a pipeline project that could offer Afghanistan a way out of its economic hardship. The proposed TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline project would send 3.5 billion cubic metres of gas per day from Turkmenistan to and through Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The countries concerned have met on the sidelines of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline meeting in Islamabad and with an Iranian delegation afterwards. This is theoretically a good way, especially for the Afghan economy and its people, but the blueprints on the desks will become reality only when there are no terrorist attacks and the security situation there has improved substantially. Afghanistan surely has the potential for emerging as a trade and transit hub for the resource-rich Central Asia and Middle East.

Reconstruction should outpace fighting

However, the grim truth is that much of the bloodshed has been to no effect. Even if thoroughly beaten, Taliban might linger on as a nuisance “for a hundred years”. Effective tackling requires disrupting them just enough for the Afghan government to be able to re-establish control and consolidate its hold with real gains for the local people. Even though the army successfully fought off the attacks, the towns became battlegrounds devastated by fighting. Development suffered a setback and support for the Taliban grew. After some initial fierce fighting, the Taliban were forced to flee, allowing the recapture of the fallen towns with minimal destruction of life and property.

The most glaring problem in Afghanistan is that any kind of reconstruction requires an input from non-military sources, whether from the foreign office or from administrative officials. However, with the security situation still so unstable, their involvement is proving painfully slow in getting off the ground. "We have got to learn, and learn

fast, to deliver aid and reconstruction not only when it is all quiet and peaceful, but under the nose of the adversary.

Yet the slow delivery of aid and reconstruction projects is not just down to security. It is also because the international strategy relies on delivering most of its aid budget by channelling it through the government in Kabul. All they can do in ensuring security is buy time for the Afghan government to step up and do its job.

International cooperation and domestic reconciliation

Pakistani President Musharraf expressed the hope that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) could play a role in stabilizing Afghanistan. He added, "If the SCO can come along, then we would need to ensure that there is no confrontation with NATO." SCO comprises China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as full members and Iran and Pakistan as "observers". Surely SCO and NATO may not necessarily confront, but cooperate over the issues of Afghanistan reconciliation and reconstruction.

The Northern Alliance leaders of Afghanistan enjoy the support of Russia, the Central Asian states, Iran and, to some extent, Turkey. Sayyed Agha Hussein Fazel Sancharaki, spokesman of these groups which now come under the umbrella of the United National Front (UNF), revealed to the Associated Press (AP) that former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani and the top NA commander from Panjshir, Mohammed Qasim Fahim, currently a security advisor to President Hamid Karzai, have been meeting Taliban and other opposition groups during recent months for national reconciliation. He claimed these meetings involved "important people" from the Taliban. The tribal elders in the Pak-Afghan borderland and in Afghanistan have had a crucial social, cultural and a very political role. In Afghanistan for example, the council of

these tribal elders represent the various tribes and clans. Many of them have an orientation which could be described as pro-Taliban or pro-al-Qaeda. So in this respect, the traditional role of the tribal elder is something that is undergoing a change. Surely, it is nobody's case that you should use military force alone, and in a way, wipe out all the opposition that has emerged in the region. Clearly, that is a path that should not be followed. It is really trying to find some political space, through.

Expansion of war counterproductive

US officials have sought permission to strike insurgent strongholds in the lawless and mountainous region, but Pakistan has frequently emphasized that military action inside its territory is the exclusive responsibility of Pakistani forces. It has three broad elements of political, socio-economic and military. The military action alone will not be effective in permanently ending the phenomenon of terrorism. Pakistan is reaching out to the tribal leaders and notables as part of the political element of its overall strategy in the fight against terrorism. Political engagement is possible only with those who renounce militancy and violence, don't allow the use of Pakistani territory against any other country and do not help foreign terrorist elements to find hideouts in its territory. But any pre-emptive strike without the permission of Pakistani people will devastate the situation and lead to final failures.

Summing-up

Ross Masood Husain

Several learned papers — 10 to be precise — have been presented by a galaxy of renowned scholars, academics, intellectuals and policy practitioners who have assembled here on short notice from all over the world — UK, USA, Turkey and China — and from our own country, Pakistan. A distinguished audience has been continuously in attendance through all the three working sessions of this one-day meeting, and has exhibited a sustained intellectual interest in this topical and vital issue through a series of lively question-answer sessions that followed the presentation of papers. Indeed, the theme of the Seminar generated so much enthusiasm and heated discussion that the chief guest and chairmen of working sessions were tempted to make comments based on their inside knowledge or to deliver scholarly orations. I refer here in particular to the brilliant inaugural address delivered by Lt Gen Kamal Matinuddin who undertook this task on the sudden and unexplained absence of an invited minister. In this sense, the Seminar has been a resounding success, and my heartiest felicitations are due to the President, Institute of Regional Studies, Maj Gen

Jamshed Ayaz Khan, and his team of dedicated men and women from the staff of the Institute.

The papers presented at the seminar revealed a wide variety of perceptions about the Afghan phenomenon. Perceptions are important in the sense that perceptions set goals and reflect agendas for the future. Some perceptions, however, had little or no relation to reality: sprung from assumptions that are either faulty or wishful. Precisely for this reason, it is deemed essential that perceptions shed their rigidity and remain flexible, as this assures that any gap between perception and reality would not reach menacing proportions, and could still be handled by political means without the need of recourse to the weapons of violence or the processes of coercive diplomacy. I am happy to report that the majority of papers read at the seminar and most of the comments thereon followed this line of approach: they took stock of options and objectives, discarded the clichés of the past, and helped set and reset — according to each one's lights — A the priorities of the Afghan problem.

The theme of the seminar was neatly structured into a number of sub-themes, each vital and topical. The papers and the comments thereon, covered a broad spectrum of opinions — ranging at one extreme from an anguished cry of frustration and despair (NATO's difficulties and failures, the tribal spillover, the resurgence of the Taliban, narco-terrorism, ideologically-motivated militants and the impact of their activity on peace and stability in the region) to the other extreme of a loud incantation of pious hopes and intentions (central destabilizer to central stabilizer, good governance, economic development, building a trouble-free Afghanistan and the like). In between, the learned participants offered all kinds of recipes for strengthening the peace process in Afghanistan and improving the effectiveness of its performance. Despite glaring lapses in the political field — of which participants were acutely aware — some scholars were at pains to point out that the dark and clouded picture of Afghanistan was somewhat

relieved by a bright flash or two of economic performance and infrastructural reconstruction.

The paper on tribal areas and its spillover effect was particularly illuminating. FATA, or the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, is a much misunderstood area. Spawned in the fire and fury of two contending empires — Imperial Britain and Czarist Russia — and a fiery product of what Rudyard Kipling called the “Great Game”, FATA for Imperial Britain was a bulwark guarding the northwest approaches to its Indian dominions. That bulwark still stands today but not as a sentinel: advances in military technology and changes in the international balance of power have taken care of that. Today, FATA is a mere belt of territory, supposedly acting as a “buffer zone” between the Afghan border and the “settled districts” (to use old British terminology) of Pakistan. The writ of Pakistan’s law stops on the borders of FATA. It continues to be inhabited by the same Pukhtun tribes whose highly intractable nature as well as the politico-military compulsions of the time had forced Imperial Britain to make a compromise, and leave the inhabitants to run their lives according to their customary laws and traditions. On independence in 1947, Pakistan continued the same arrangements. The result has been that, after years of benign neglect, the entire tribal belt has come to pose a serious law and order problem for state authority on either side of the belt. The area’s rugged and mountainous topography and the *Pukhtunwali* code of honour of the inhabitants have traditionally offered an ideal sanctuary for all kinds of unsocial elements — from smugglers to gunrunners, from drug peddlers to terrorists, and from fugitives from the law to fundamentalists and extremists. Indeed, the entire region of the tribal belt, from Swat and Indus Kohistan down to the Khawaja Amran Range in Baluchistan, has always been known as “Yaghistan” — the Land of the Rebels. As a relic of the colonial past, which has outlived its usefulness, FATA today appears to have become an anachronism. There are many who believe that it is time its

unique, separate legal status was abolished, and FATA merged into and integrated with the politico-administrative and legal infrastructure of Pakistan.

Be that as it may, the general consensus of the seminar is that the unabated turmoil in Afghanistan is not as simple as it seems. The Afghanistan of today is like a complex protein molecule. To understand it at all, the analyst must break it down into its component parts and weigh them individually. Also, since the turmoil in Afghanistan is not an event but a process, participants felt that it would be more relevant to evaluate its progress not in the short-term but in a long-term context. Furthermore, although the NATO intervention was a reaction to the international environment of the time, it should essentially be seen as based on the strategic needs of the West. Yet, given the political realities of the day, NATO should not expect to be a peace-restoring mechanism but rather as a rehabilitation- and reconstruction-promoting device and, that too, in certain selected and feasible areas. And, again, given the central role of Islam, members felt that it is important that NATO should so conduct itself as to be seen by the Afghans and by other societies and civilizations in the region and beyond as an asset and not as a source of fear or threat. Participants felt that there is a need for a redefinition of NATO's mission. The climate for cooperation among the member states of NATO may not be too hospitable because of inter-state differences, conflicting responses to the political changes of the times, divergences in the pursuit of foreign policies and, at times, incongruities in economic interests. But, for the seminar participants, these very factors constitute the challenges and provide opportunities for the combined wisdom of the West to grapple with.

What, then, is the future of Afghanistan? It is the general sense of the seminar that, despite current difficulties — and these are formidable — the future is not without hope. What is required is a strategic vision with several components. Speaker after speaker has listed these. It is

important for all interested states to muster the political will to forge solidarity (in the face of extraneous influence and internal pressures to the contrary), and ensure that there is no deceleration of aid and cooperation activities by foreign donors. Afghanistan's neighbours need to improve their political, economic and security cooperation with Kabul — and this applies in particular to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Both should refrain from the "blame game" which is sowing the seeds of discord in the relationship. Given the political will for realistic bilateralism, security cooperation and economic collaboration, the assembled scholars feel that Afghanistan, like the proverbial phoenix, has the potential to rise from its ashes and take its rightful place in the global comity of nations. Given the grit, courage and determination of the heroic Afghan people, rise they shall for the greater glory of their flag and country. As far as we in Pakistan are concerned, the people of Pakistan extend their hand of friendship and wish their Afghan brethren well and God speed in their nation-building endeavours.

Concluding Remarks

Terrorism is a major concern for the whole world today. However, Muslim countries are facing terrible consequences, owing to their identity linked with Islam. There is a dire need to infuse a sense among Muslims as well as the people of the whole world that terrorism is totally opposite to what Islam stands for. So, it would be naïve to link it in any way to Islam. To me terrorism is more of a structural problem created because of the growing gap between the West and the rest of the world. This gap is generating hatred and distrust for the Western culture. If nothing is done to bridge that gap, floodgates of terror networks will open. Therefore, a systemic approach is needed to address this problem.

As for Pakistan, it has been facing terrorism even prior to 9/11. We need to employ a systematic strategy to address this problem. In this task the media has a vital role to play. Instead of sensationalizing the issue, the media needs to deal with it realistically and pragmatically in order to help the public have a clear understanding of the menace.

To cope with terrorism effectively, the Government of Pakistan should take the following measures:

First of all, there must be a strong commitment to deal with terrorism, despite obstacles and failures. The government should enhance collaboration on regional and

international levels. The forum of OIC needs to be utilized to initiate collective measures. This would not only enhance understanding of this sensitive issue among Muslim states but also help in encouraging them to take measures in order to deal with terrorism independently.

At regional level, the government should build understanding and take both the governments of Afghanistan and India into confidence against this menace. It should endeavour to make an arrangement with them in order to share information speedily about terrorist activities taking place on their respective sides. This would help them all take pre-emptive measures.

On domestic level, the government should arrange discussions with all the religious parties in order to boost their confidence that they have their say in the matter. Any alienation of these groups would have drastic consequences. These measures would help in bridging the gap between the government and the religious parties.

Developmental projects like building the infrastructure, poverty alleviation programmes, providing education, health facilities and promoting healthy innovative activities that may engage the youth to help them build their careers are some indirect ways which would have a direct impact in mitigating intensity of the problem. Through effective use of both the electronic and print media we can promote the culture of peace internally. This slow and steady structural change would enable people to have faith in evolution. It will rule out the 'revolutionary' approach of some sections of society which brings nothing but bloodshed. More importantly, there must be some sustainable strategy of checks and balances over the mosques. Organizations engaged in clandestine operations need to be banned. Eventually, the war on terrorism can be won by winning the hearts and minds and not by force of weapons

Recent elections have proved that an overwhelming majority of our people are moderate and peace-loving. A tiny

minority of extremists is out to challenge all that we hold dear in life. It is our major concern to contain terrorism. The reason why we are supporting the US-led coalition and trying to pacify the Tribal Areas and re-establish the writ of the state in the settled districts of NWFP is that it is a matter of life and death for us. Dialogue with Tribal Elders should be encouraged. We must use development as a carrot and presence of the armed forces as a stick. But it must not be forgotten that this would be a prolonged process demanding patience; therefore we need consistent support of the international community.

Finally, the Government of Pakistan should keep open both ways to tackle the issue, the hard one and the soft one. The use of force, where necessary, as well as ‘dialogue’ need to be utilized in order to deal with the issue comprehensively.

In the end, I would like to thank all of you on behalf of my colleagues at the IRS for making this event a success. I am thankful to all the worthy scholars who travelled long distances to participate in this international seminar, as well as the organizers for making them feel comfortable and at home. Finally I would thank the audience for their earnest participation.

— *Maj Gen Jamshed Ayaz Khan (Retd)*

The Contributors

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Brig Mahmood Shah (Retd) has vast experience in the civil and military departments in his capacity as commandant, Junior Leaders Academy; director, Military Intelligence, Balochistan; secretary, Home, NWFP, and secretary, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

Ms Marvi Memon: A newly elected member of the National Assembly, Ms Marvi Memon graduated from London School of

Economics in international relations. Later she spent some years at CitiBank. She launched Pakistan's first satellite tracking multinational and also served as media advisor and investment advisor to the government.

Ms Shahzadi Beg is a British-based barrister who has practised for than 15 years in criminal and human rights law. Has been working as Immigration judge since 1995. She co-authored a report on "The Rule of Law and Human Rights in the Legal System of Pakistan." She is currently working on the Jihandi Rehabilitation and Disengagement Project in NWFP.

Ms Laura Schuurmans is a freelance journalist based in Jakarta, Indonesia. She is a regular contributor to the *Jakarta Post*. Her fields of interest include Afghanistan. She visited Islamabad twice at the invitation of the Institute of Regional Studies.

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Zhou Rong: After earning his master's in international relations, he served as Lecturer and Assistant Professor at the China Contemporary International Relations Institute and South Asia-Southeast Asia and Australia Study Centre. He has written several articles on Pakistan, India, Iran, and Afghanistan.