

Symposium

Developments in Afghanistan Implications for Pakistan and the Region

[Last few months have seen some significant developments in Afghanistan including, but not limited to, the presidential elections and the formation of Ghani-Abdullah national government and subsequent signing of the pending Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the US. These developments will undoubtedly play an important part in shaping the internal and external dynamics of the country in years to come. It is also an established fact that any development, small or big, in Afghanistan has a bearing of one sort or the other on Pakistan as well. It was in this background that *Policy Perspectives* sought the analysis of selected but key Pakistani opinion makers, representing various sections of society, as to what the developments taking place across the Durand line will mean for Pakistan in addition to their overall impact upon and linkages with the regional situation. This symposium is a product of the responses thus generated over past few months' period. – Eds.]

*Ayaz Wazir**

Afghanistan entered in a new phase of its political life on September 29, 2014 with Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai taking over as president after he signed an agreement with his arch rival, Abdullah Abdullah for the formation of a national unity government, an idea brokered by the US secretary of state. A unique arrangement, whereby a defeated candidate becomes a part of the government instead of being in the opposition, such an example is difficult to find in the annals of modern democratic history. However, a somewhat similar precedent can be found in American history when in the 1796 election, Thomas Jefferson after receiving the second highest number of electoral votes became vice-president. But the 1800 election exposed the defects of the system and it was thus discontinued. How far this will succeed in Afghanistan is something we will have to wait for but the chances of its success appear to be not so bright given the conditions prevailing in the country and the temperament of the Afghan people.

By accepting the American-brokered agreement for a national unity government and then signing the Bilateral Security Agreement, President Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai paved the way for the stationing of the US residual force in his country and also ensured the inflow of foreign funds badly needed for the smooth sailing, for the time being at least, of his government.

Having accomplished the two most important tasks he is now occupied with short-listing candidates for his cabinet from among the many strong contenders who supported him in the elections. While he

*Ambassador (r) Ayaz Wazir is Pakistan's former envoy. He is also a senior IPS associate.

has to tread carefully in selecting the right candidates for the right jobs he also needs to take care of the side his chief executive represents to avoid cracks forming in the new setup right at the outset of his mandate. The selection of the candidates will also serve as an indicator of his preferences for steering the country out of the quagmire it has been in for the last so many decades.

Then he has to start with the daunting task of bringing peace to the country which cannot be done without making some kind of a deal with the Taliban. An equally important job for him would be setting the stage for improving relations with Pakistan, which is not only an immediate neighbour but also has vital stakes in Afghanistan.

Dr Ashraf Ghani will have to be extra careful to ensure that the agreement reached with Abdullah Abdullah for the national unity government endures. Unless

It is up to the Afghans to do whatever they can to sort out the Taliban issue since the US does not seem to be willing to waste more time on running after the Taliban.

there is genuine unity between them the new government will be unable to surmount the many challenges it faces, especially that from the Taliban. And if they do maintain unity that will send positive signals to the Taliban and be an advantage for striking a deal

otherwise that will make it easy for the Taliban to make their presence felt in Kabul and that too in a big way.

The US will be completing withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 leaving only around 10,000 troops in its military bases under the BSA.

Whether the signing of the BSA will weaken the resolve of the Taliban or not remains to be seen but their rejection of the new government immediately after its installation shows their intention of continuing the fight as best as they can so long as foreign forces are present in Afghanistan.

The only way to avoid that situation would either be the withdrawal of the residuary force from there or making some kind of a deal with the Taliban of which the Afghans are quite capable on their own – if not hindered by foreign interference. The focus of the US has shifted from Afghanistan to the Middle East and it appears more inclined to sort out the issue of the Daish, if it can, rather than the problems in Afghanistan. Therefore, it is up to the Afghans to do whatever they can to sort out the Taliban issue since the US does not seem to be willing to waste more time on running after the Taliban for negotiations.

That is to be done by the Afghans and nowhere in the past has a situation been so conducive for initiating a peace process with the Taliban as it is now. Dr Ashraf Ghani has the distinct advantage of not having played any role in the Afghan wars nor did he enter Kabul riding an American tank. He is the right person for taking a bold initiative. While US spent a staggering \$640 billion from 2002 to 2013 [on Afghan war] it did very little for the development of Afghanistan. Most of the funds were spent on servicing foreign troops which are now about to leave or given as bounty to different factions or warlords to keep them on board. There is hardly any evidence of large-scale investment in agriculture or basic industry in the country. The government almost broke down recently not having enough money to pay salaries to more than half a million employees. Only signing the BSA ensured inflow of foreign funds for keeping the government afloat.

Dr Ashraf Ghani is a renowned economist with many ideas for development of his country but for that peace in the country is a prerequisite. And for peace he will have to work seriously and methodically to engage with the Taliban. The Taliban, on their part, are keeping pressure on the government by showing a strong presence almost in the 50 percent of the country. The province of Helmand will be the first casualty if the pressure increases and when that happens there will be a domino effect on other areas in the south and east. To avoid such a collapse the success of the unity government assumes great significance. Many believe that the president weakened his position by agreeing to the formation of a unity government and by giving to his rival the position of chief executive officer, a post for which the constitution will be amended in due course to give it legal cover. He could have easily refused to give this important position to Abdullah Abdullah and forced him to play the role of leader of the opposition but he preferred to accommodate him in his government for the sake of peace and security in the country.

Ashraf Ghani is a renowned economist with many ideas for development of his country but for that peace in the country is a prerequisite.

Now it is for Abdullah Abdullah to reciprocate; the onus of maintaining unity lies mainly on his shoulders which he should fulfill by faithfully implementing the policies of Dr. Ghani rather than trying to overshadow or sabotage him through divergent actions. That is what the situation demands and that is what everybody expects for return of peace to the country.

At the same time as trying to tackle the Taliban issue the new Afghan government should also extend a hand of friendship towards Pakistan where the situation is conducive for constructive engagement. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has already sent his adviser on foreign affairs to Kabul to extend an invitation to President Ghani for a visit to

The new Afghan government should also extend a hand of friendship towards Pakistan where the situation is conducive for constructive engagement.

Islamabad. The Chief of Army Staff visited Kabul on November 6, 2014, to reassure the leadership there of Pakistan's sincerity, help and cooperation in paving the way for friendly relations between the two countries as well as in resolving the main issue that the people of Afghanistan face there. The

time is ripe for striking a deal for peace both at home and abroad, with the Taliban and the government of Pakistan. Hopefully the new Afghan president will seize the opportunity.

*Rustam Shah Mohmand**

Afghanistan is in a state of continuous war; some people of the country are part of this war, so they neither accept the system and the constitution of the country nor the recent presidential election which was conducted, in their view, under the foreign sponsored arrangement in the country. They believe that, the present system, institutions and constitution of the country are not working independently as these have been established under the foreign invasion. Therefore, while talking about 'internal players' of Afghanistan, it needs to be recognized that a sizable section of the society has not participated in the election. Consequently they do not recognize the outcome of these elections. They are fighting a war which one may call insurgency or militancy etc. yet they view it as war of liberation. As the people of Afghanistan grew up under the Soviet occupation, they believe they have reason of fighting against the American occupation too. But when they were fighting against Soviet Union, they had world's support and now because of American influence on the whole world, the world has aligned with America in this war. To them there is no difference: Soviet's had military occupation of Afghanistan as Americans have at present. The rank and file Afghans stood to defend their liberty and ideology during the soviet occupation and, in this case also, the rank and file Afghans have been resisting against American aggression, to defend their country.

*Amb. (r) Rustam Shah Mohmand is former Pakistani envoy to Afghanistan and a member of IPS National Academic Council. He was a member of the committee nominated by the Government of Pakistan for talks with TTP during early part of 2014. This piece is based on his interview conducted by IPS team consisting of Ms. Fehmeedah Khalid and Ms. Waqar-un-Nisa.

As Taliban are currently excluded from the canvas, the international community is not prepared to accept any role for them. The US-led coalition have created a 'new Afghanistan' according to their own interests and they want everybody to be the passive participant of this new Afghanistan. Those who refuse to come on board are excluded, while others who accept this scheme of things are welcomed. In other words, the beneficiaries of the system like Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Dr. Ashraf Ghani are getting advantages. They are the product of the system introduced by the Americans and have derived huge benefits politically, economically and socially from the system during the last 12

They [the US-led coalition] have created a 'new Afghanistan' according to their own interests and they want everybody to be the passive participant of this.

years. Thus, there is no difference between the two, they neither have any political parties in Afghanistan nor have any manifestos for the future setup. They are just two individuals controlling two different groups and trying to grab as much power as possible and glorify themselves in the eyes of the Afghan public, as if they are the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan having been voted into power. But that is not the case. People had to vote for someone, they suffered a lot, so they had to vote for somebody, no matter for whom. Most of the people in the country do not accept the whole system; they realized that, Karzai, Abdullah Abdullah or Ashraf Ghani are the products of American led system and have nothing to do with the interests of the common Afghans. At the broader level, America is still playing the shots in the realm of security and counter insurgency; American policy is so dominant that the incumbent president will have not much options but to continue in a subservient role to America. Eventually, it will rarely have an impact in the future.

Without participation of a major segment of the society in the political system, the present Afghan government does not reflect the aspirations of the people; neither the parliament nor other institutions of the country represent the whole Afghanistan. The most damaging thing is that fighting is continued, insurgency, is not only going on, might get stronger in the coming days with greater intensity. Thus while the coalition forces are withdrawing, the resistance may become stronger, they may launch more besieged attacks on the coalition forces and on the government. Just as America's Iraq experiment has failed and Iraq has gradually annihilated, America's experiment in Afghanistan has also met with abject failure.

The word election has very myopic implication for the political landscape of the country as it is not really relevant with the objective of stability of Afghanistan. What is relevant is how to end the war and

settle the conflict, in this scenario. While a change has taken place in the presidency, insurgency and fighting have continued. As indicated earlier, it might expand in terms of its scope and intensity and there is a risk that attrition rate of the military, which is currently 10 percent, can rise and go even up to 20 to 25 percent. In such a scenario Afghanistan's security infrastructure would begin to collapse, that would be a very dangerous sign. More and more people would be inclined to join the resistance that will cause more destruction and deception. Even

Elections are not so relevant with the stability of Afghanistan. What is relevant is how to end the war and how to settle the conflict.

now, resistance reigns over a large territory – more than what perhaps the government controls. They have their courts, their *shuras*, *walis* and other social institutions. People go to them and take their cases in their courts for adjudication. So the picture is not so bright and election has not changed the ground realities of Afghanistan. The core realities will

only change once the root-cause is addressed, which is the presence of the coalition forces in Afghanistan. As long as the coalition forces will linger on the soil of Afghanistan, stability of the country would remain a far cry.

Here, a question arises: how to mainstream the resistance; I believe there are common grounds prevailing for it. First of all, resistance elements would agree that there should be no Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan anymore. Secondly the Afghan soil would not be used against any other country and thirdly Afghanistan would progress towards establishing a pluralistic society. Moreover, an undertaking by the neighboring countries, under some UN arrangement that they would not interfere in the sphere of Afghanistan, will have positive implications.

Pakistan as an immediate neighbor is directly affected by the happenings in Afghanistan. No country has suffered as much from the Afghanistan's instability as Pakistan, and no country would gain as much as Pakistan would gain from the stability of Afghanistan. So, as long as there is trouble, the border will remain destabilized. And Pakistan will also suffer due to the destabilized border. Afghan government would continue to blame and accuse Pakistan for harboring militants and for providing sanctuaries to the militants which is certainly debatable. But in order to cover their own inability or lack of capacity to eliminate or crush the militancy they will continue to blame Pakistan.

On Pakistani end, Islamabad is also not doing what it should have been doing. Pakistan is not anticipating about the future, neither it is playing any solid, historic constructive role in the situation which otherwise poses great challenges for it. In an ideal scenario it should have been Pakistan to host the dialogue between Taliban and the US,

and not Qatar. There seems a lack of foresight on Pakistan's front, a lack of intelligent anticipation and of political maturity because most of the time, the bigger picture has not been taken into account by Pakistan; it has been reacting to the situation. Islamabad can be a genuine mediator. It enjoys some leverage on both sides, the resistance and the Americans. Pakistan, until now, has unfortunately missed to bag the opportunity.

In this backdrop it is quite difficult to be optimistic that ties can be sustainably boost up between the two countries in the future. Bilateral relations would neither improve nor decline much between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the coming days because both countries are allies of America. In the American scheme of things, they have to cooperate with each other, so under the American pressure, relations will continue in the same manner. Then it is also a reality that both countries need each other; Pakistan needs Afghanistan and Central Asia for stability and for the security of its borders. Afghanistan needs Pakistan for Karachi and Gwadar port and certainly for its border security.

**Pakistan can be a
genuine mediator and it
has support both from the
resistance and the
Americans.**

About the increasing Indian involvement in Afghanistan, Pakistan needs to adopt a more realistic approach, because no country has the right to interfere in another's affairs. Afghanistan is an sovereign country and has the right to form its relations independently by following its own interests.

*Imtiaz Gul**

The relationship between the so-called *Siamese Twins* is replete with frequent ups and downs, often alternating friendly vows followed by allegations and acrimony. Pak-Afghan ties touched the lowest ebb during General Pervez Musharraf's reign as president until August 2008. Both Musharraf and Afghan president Hamid Karzai often traded harsh words and allegations. Although publicly warm towards Asif Ali Zardari, Musharraf's successor, and Nawaz Sharif, prime minister since June 2013, Karzai kept oscillating for reasons best known to him. Publicly he expressed optimism about Pakistan under Sharif, yet he never refrained from spewing venomous statements indicting Pakistan for a number of militant attacks that took place before, during and after the presidential election in Afghanistan. At the same time, a more structured dialogue on counter-terror cooperation also got underway with the visit of a

*Imtiaz Gul is Executive Director of the Centre for Research and Security Studies, Islamabad.

high-level Afghan delegation led by Rangeen Dadfar Spanta, national security advisor, to Islamabad in June 2014.

Pakistani officials state they already have a comprehensive roadmap ready whenever the new Afghan president meets the Pakistani chief executive. It is a clearly spelt out mechanism that places economy at the centre of the bilateral relationship. With Ashraf Ghani, a professional economist, heading the Arg (the Presidential Palace) in Kabul and Sharif brothers in Pakistan in the driving seat, one can hope leaders from both sides can push economic collaboration beyond political disagreements and the traditional mistrust that exists between the two establishments. Some of the challenges that confront both countries at the dawn of the new presidency in Kabul and ahead of the bulk withdrawal of the US-led NATO troops can be listed as follows:

The first challenge for Pakistan is to table a clearly defined roadmap for relations with delineated priorities, something that should also be taken in positive stride by the new Afghan leadership.

The first challenge for Pakistan is to table a clearly defined roadmap for relations with delineated priorities, something that should also be taken in positive stride by the new Afghan leadership.

Second, Pakistan must reach out to Afghans for restoring mutual trust. The Afghans need to be convinced that Islamabad looks at their country as a sovereign and independent country.

Third, trust will follow only if Pakistan can demonstrate through action that Pakistan has no favorites.

Meanwhile can discern from discussions with Pakistani civilian and military stakeholders that they also realize the futility of the policy they pursued for decades which used Afghan dissidents and Pashtoon leaders as instruments of its strategic depth doctrine. This they have to convey to Afghans in unambiguous terms that Pakistan holds interests of Afghanistan paramount and therefore nurtures no Afghan insurgent group any more. And here, the most intricate issue at hand is Pakistan's links with the Haqqani Network and with other Afghan Taliban groups. This issue generated quite a bit of mistrust and frustration in Washington too. This frustration in fact climaxed with the then US army chief Admiral Michael Mullen, who had been an ardent Pakistan supporter, telling a Senate committee on September 22, 2011 that "the Haqqani Network is a veritable arm of the ISI." The Haqqani Network in fact also constitutes the core of issues that damage Pakistan's image abroad.

"The real issue is not border management... it is sourcing out borders to militants," Senator Afrasiab Khattak recently explained in an interview with a foreign radio. "Unfortunately, Pakistan has been doing it for a very long time, and recently the Afghans have also resorted to this tactic by giving shelter to our fugitives. I think we have to stop this."

Fourth, both countries MUST initiate a dialogue between the two security establishments who need to disengage from their respective proxies. In fact, during a meeting at the UK prime minister's country residence, Chequers, in February 2013, President Karzai and his Pakistani counterpart Asif Ali Zardari agreed on a communiqué stating that a security dialogue between the military and intelligence of both countries should start. Foreign ministers, military leaders and intelligence chiefs also attended the talks. William Hague told the Commons on March 5, 2013 during Foreign Office questions:

Bilateral ties can move out of political acrimony if both Kabul and Islamabad can strategize economic cooperation and trade as the underpinning factor for their engagement.

"Both sides committed themselves to taking all necessary measures to achieve a peace settlement over the next six months...and reaffirmed their commitment to a strategic partnership with each other."¹

A sustained and structured dialogue among the security establishments of Pakistan, Afghanistan and India, represents the only viable chance of extricating the triangular relationship from shadows of a deadly proxy war in the region.

Fifth, Pakistan shall have to also work closely with Kabul to reduce and neutralize external spoilers as far as bilateral relations are concerned. Kabul would need to reassure Islamabad that Pak-Afghan relations are not contingent upon latter's ties with other countries such as India.

Sixth, bilateral ties can move out of political acrimony if both Kabul and Islamabad can strategize economic cooperation and trade as the underpinning factor for their engagement. They need a roadmap which can take their bilateral trade from the current roughly \$2.5 billion to \$5 billion dollars in near future.

Seventh, Pakistan will have to fix its relations with India if it wants to lessen troubles that emanate from or on the western border.

¹Accessed from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/house-of-commons-21673106>

Policy Perspectives

Both India and Afghanistan are wary of the non-state actors that target their interests. In both cases, Pakistan is considered the common denominator. And that is why, according to British historian William Dalrymple, the region is witnessing a triangular proxy war.²

Last but not the least, both countries must evolve a joint border control mechanism to regulate the movement of over 50,000 people across the Durand Line, the official border. The easement right (a right of unchecked border crossing available to members of divided families and tribes that straddle the border region) needs to give way to the introduction of formal travel documents and biometrics for creating a data-base of people moving that both sides of the 2,560 km long border.

It is encouraging to note during a meeting between Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan Syed Abrar Hussain and a delegation of Pak-Afghan Joint Chambers of Commerce and Industries (PAJCCI) and senior government officials, led by Afghan Deputy Minister for Trade, Mozammil Shinwari, in Kabul, both sides agreed to work for doubling the trading volume in coming years.³

Hope for strategic counter-terror and counter-narcotics cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan stems from a new realization in Pakistan – if taken on face value – that the return of Taliban to power by force will be disastrous for Pakistan. They will provide the "strategic depth" for their Pakistani counterparts, and thus contribute to further destabilization of Pakistan. All we want is to support the democratic transition in Afghanistan, officials insist. We hope the new president Ashraf Ghani would spearhead the reconciliation process in a way that engages with the Taliban militants for a political way of Afghanistan's current crisis.

This is what Pakistan too needs to back in a transparent way, moving from the cold-war era policies to pragmatism of realpolitik which is dictated by the quest for economic survival through commercial linkages.

The US' transforming role in Afghanistan from combating to assisting mission; drawdown of its forces and its inclination towards regional consensual, leads towards seeking of a collaborative framework for Afghanistan that placed a bigger responsibility on the main regional actors; China and Russia. In the regional context, China's role is predominant, because Russia holds unpleasant history with

²Brookings Essay "A Deadly Triangle", *June 2013*,
<http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c>

³Accessed from: <http://www.nation.com.pk/business/19-May-2014/pakistan-afghanistan-mull-trade-expansion-up-to-5b>

Afghanistan and that creates hindrance in contributing its active role in the Afghan reconciliation and reconstruction process.

A regional collaborative framework can promote win-win cooperation through non-traditional security means under an All-Asia Security Umbrella – relevant not only for Afghanistan but for the entire region. In this regard, The Chinese Prime Minister’s five points have vital importance, presented in the opening ceremony of the fourth ministerial conference of the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan in Beijing on October 31, 2014⁴.

The American shift in its policy and its reluctance in staying in the front-runner role in West Asia (which of course is the obvious result of its strategic blunders in Afghanistan and Iraq) provides exceptional role to China and other regional countries. Regional countries must avail this opportunity, and fill-up the vacuum being created by America. Regional stakeholders including Iran should form a regional collaborative mechanism for a non-traditional security engagement with Afghanistan, and jointly oversee the peace and reconstruction efforts in that country.

**In the regional context,
China’s role is
predominant, because
Russia holds unpleasant
history with Afghanistan
and that creates
hindrance.**

In this situation, Pakistan and China should learn from the US-led intervention in Afghanistan that a security-centric, contractor-driven, selective approach instead of an inclusive approach in conflict management and conflict resolution will never lead towards success. What is needed is an equal-handed, long-term, all-inclusive engagement with all stakeholders and only such an approach can help Afghanistan successfully handle its national reconciliation efforts.

⁴The excerpt of the Chinese Prime Minister’s speech is quoted here: “[China] will provide non-reimbursable assistance of \$244 million in the upcoming three years to Afghanistan... will help Afghanistan train 3,000 people of all circles in the upcoming five years and provide 500 scholarships... strengthen the bilateral cooperation in such areas as infrastructure construction, agriculture, water conservancy and mineral resources exploitation. Li also presented five-point proposals for the solution of Afghan issue including insisting self-governance of the Afghan people, promoting political reconciliation among different Afghan political parties, speeding up economic reconstruction, exploring a development path for the country and strengthening external support to it... Li Keqiang stressed that the international community should respect Afghanistan’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, not interfere with its internal affairs and support Afghanistan’s efforts to realize security and stability.”

China's active commitment in Afghanistan can also serve as a counterbalancing factor among Pakistan-Afghanistan and India and eventually it will neutralize the impact of geo-politics that these three countries are involved in. There is a need for all three countries to turn their energies in more constructive ways rather than blaming each other.

Another major concern of the regional countries is growing poppy production in Afghanistan; that is a big contributing factor in Afghan economy. They are rightly worried about this trade has increased despite the presence of a huge 40,000 strong US and UK force in Helmand province. The Camp Leatherneck (US) and Bastion (UK), now shut down formally, were in Helmand but the province topped the opium supplying Afghan districts, with at least 80 percent of the drug coming from Helmand. Pakistan, too, suffers as much as the Central Asian Republics as well as Russia and potentially China: as in Narcotics Control Division Secretary Akbar Khan Hoti's words "Pakistan is not only being used as transit country but it is also a consumer of different drugs, regretting that most of the youth from wealthy families was using drugs.

*Babar Shah**

Looking at the history of Afghanistan one finds certain factors as permanent features of the Afghan Politico-Administrative culture. These include internal power struggles, strained centre periphery relations, conflicts of varying scales and politico-Ideological polarization. Internal conflicts have always been creating reasons for external involvement in the country. History appears repeating in a cyclical manner and each conflict ending with giving birth to another.

The phase of the Afghan political history that began in 2001 after the fall of the Taliban Regime with extensive international military and economic engagement and initiation of large scale political, economic and infrastructure reconstruction is to cross a major milestone in December 2014 when most of foreign forces would withdraw from the country. Agreed that some progress has been recorded in the country but it still has to go a long way ahead to offer a peaceful and happy life to its war weary people. There is a need to preserve, protect and built on whatever has been achieved during the last thirteen years.

The foremost questions in the post 2014 Afghanistan concern the shape of new power sharing arrangements in the country. How the president and the chief executive divide powers and how the constitution is amended for that remains to be seen? The element of distrust, however, might prevail as the issue of rigging and lack of transparency were raised by Mr. Abdullah for which the US had to

*Prof. Dr. Babar Shah is the head of the Department for Regional Studies, Peshawar University.

intervene and settle the issue. Potency of the new set up to deliver will also be a test case in the country where politics along ethno-regional lines are becoming common.

In this regard, capacity and capability of the institutions to deliver would be the first question. Especially, the case of Afghan National Army and Police when they would take a complete charge to maintain security and law and order in the country. The limited number of US troops would probably have a defined and supportive role unlike the present.

**The Afghan problem
during the last over three
decades has transformed
into a regional issue.**

The country's economy is largely dependent on foreign aid and foreign funded program. The in-country spending of the foreign troops stationed in the country was a big support to the national economy. This support would drastically reduce with the withdrawal of the foreign troops. So could be the case of international economic and political engagement as well. How Afghan Economic managers overcome this loss would be a big task.

Afghanistan economy will not be able to offer large scale employment. Thus providing jobs to a big number of educated youth, skilled labor and returning refugees would be a big question. So would be the case in sectors of health, education, security, industry, commerce, trade, etc.

Taliban have got themselves recognized as an un-deniable entity in the Afghan society. NATO and US withdrawal would give them a sense of victory. They could continue with their rejection of the new set-up. This rejection would be further catalyzed by the presence of the US troops in the country. Most probably, they will continue with their anti-Kabul operation that would make security a big challenge.

On the other hand the Afghan problem during the last three decades has transformed into a regional issue. The problems emanating from the Afghan soil are not only affecting its neighbors but region at large. These include terrorism, militancy, extremism, border management, migration, narcotics, etc. Similarity the Afghan theatre has also drastically changed. Many new actors have entered the scene. Afghanistan is no longer a nation or country issue. Its turning into a regional issue has raised genuine concerns of the neighboring and the regional countries, particularly Pakistan. Pakistan is the most affected country of the Afghan instability and can rightly be called a stakeholder in the Afghan situation.

Pakistan for a number of reasons has inextricably been involved in the Afghan crises. These range from geographic proximity, frontline state position for the Afghan Mujahideen and now in war against terrorism to meeting its moral and religious obligation of helping its Afghan Muslim brethren in the hours of crisis. Pakistan's contribution, unfortunately, have not been

It is good to be optimistic, but given the historical record and prevailing grounds reality, one also finds reasons to be pessimistic about the post 2014 state of affairs.

recognized and respected in truer spirit. Problems like terrorism, extremism, militancy, narcotics etc. that Pakistan is facing today, are fallout of the Afghan crisis. Security has become Pakistan's most serious problem due to which the country is suffering in all terms from political, to economic, social, and strategic and so on. It is good to be optimistic, but given the

historical record and prevailing grounds reality, one also finds reasons to be pessimistic about the post 2014 state of affairs in the country.

In the light of its experience of dealing with Afghan country and nation, Pakistan in the post 2014 scenario would like to see a peaceful stable and prosperous Afghanistan. Only a stable, peaceful and developed Afghanistan can serve Pakistan interests. The record shows that Pakistan has always played its role for promotion of peace and stability in Afghanistan. This is clear from its consistent efforts in this regard from Geneva talks to 1992-93 peace accords and the recent Taliban-US negotiation. In the post 2014 environment Pakistan should pursue the following:

1. Efforts for peace, security, stability and development in Afghanistan both at bilateral and regional level;
2. An expression and demonstration that it has no favorites in Afghanistan; all groups are equal for it;
3. Joint efforts in combating terrorism, militancy, extremism, narcotics control etc. through effective intelligence sharing and confidence building;
4. A bilateral assurance of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and not allowing respective soil against each other;
5. An effective border control and management system that could prevent the cross border movements of the elements working against Pak-Afghan interests as well as against regional stability and security;
6. Devising of an affective system for the repatriation of the Afghan refugees so that they could contribute in their motherland's reconstruction and reduce their burden from Pakistan.

*Asad Durrani**

Despite some ill will with its new post-1947 eastern neighbor, Afghanistan found great value in the wellbeing of Pakistan. The latter was former's "window" to the outside world and conduit for many an essential goods. Its largest ethnic group, the Pashtuns, straddled the common borders, the Durand Line. During Pakistan's two wars with India, in 1965 & 1971, Afghanistan assured peace along the western front, while Pakistan shifted all its forces to the eastern. And indeed it continued to serve as a buffer vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

With the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 the cushion was no more, and with India in the east we came, so to speak, between the "jaws of a nutcracker". Helping the Afghan resistance, the Mujahideen, was thus our compulsion. Two years later when the US, and some others, joined the *Jihad*, the odds to evict the occupation improved. The Soviets withdrew in February 1989.

Ever since, following are the two pillars of Pakistan's Afghan Policy: Facilitate the broadest possible consensus amongst the major Afghan factions: the *raison d'être* of Afghanistan and the only recipe for its stability. With that in view, Pakistan sponsored Peshawar and Islamabad Accords of 1992; and later supported the Taliban who had dislodged the Mujahideen government in Kabul and by 1995 were the only group that could reunify the country. Secondly, since only an independent Afghanistan could keep peace on its north-western borders (1965 & 71); assist the Afghans against foreign occupations that turn the Durand Line in a bloody border.

Pakistan's present dilemma Post 9/11

There were a number of reasons for Pakistan to join the US-led war against the Taliban. India standing in, if Pakistan would not, was one of them. The specter of American air armada flying over Pak territory from Indian bases to bomb our western neighbour was pretty disconcerting. After our efforts to dissuade the US from invading Afghanistan failed and the Pashtun areas were targeted, even after the Taliban regime was toppled, with aerial weapons causing immense "collateral damage", the sentiment in Pakistan clearly turned against America.

The Taliban whose peace overtures in 2002 were rebuffed by the US, mobilized an armed resistance against the occupation. They were supported by their co-ethnics in Pakistan and in due course became a force to reckon with. Pakistan resisted American pressure to target the Taliban and their allies, the "Haqqani Network", primarily because it could not ignore the domestic groundswell and alienate the

*Lt. Gen. (r) Asad Durrani is former Director General of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI).

neighboring Afghan tribes. It was now on a collision course with the US and only after a prolonged stand-off in 2012 the two countries agreed to cooperate on exit of foreign forces from the region.

By then it was clear that the US-led alliance had failed to defeat or reconcile the Taliban, who in fact were now pocketing, every year, 500 Million Dollars from the western sources. In the meanwhile, NATO was raising, training and equipping the Afghan National Army, ostensibly to takeover security duties from the Coalition.

In a country with all possible fault lines – geographic, ethnic, tribal, even sectarian and cultural – and a history of internal conflict, security is a function of broad consensus and not of conventional armies. In 2012, the US had therefore started pressuring President Karzai to accept extended foreign military presence. Continued economic assistance was made contingent to this (bilateral security) agreement.

there are chances that the insurgency would continue, may even intensify.

Karzai may have had other reasons to “drag his feet” over signing the BSA but his conditions, especially the one regarding starting the dialogue with the Taliban, made sense. Now that the successor regime has signed it, and also SoFA (Status of Force Agreement) with NATO, essentially for continued financial support and protection against the Taliban, there are good chances that the insurgency would continue, may even intensify.

Post 2014 Prospects

Thirteen years under the foreign tutelage have certainly brought many benefits to Afghanistan: infrastructure, institutions, access to modern technology, education, and external interest; to name but a few. The last elections also saw some positive bridging of the ethnic divide (even though the Pashtun factor helped the elected president, with the Taliban contributing as well). The beneficiaries, a good number, would indeed fight to retain these gains.

The problem is that the system cannot sustain itself, financially and militarily, without (seemingly) open ended external support, which obviously is not forever; even not for too long. During the last few years the economic activity has sharply declined with up to \$8 Billion dollars leaving the country every year.

Decision – making in Washington suffered from institutional discord. The principles of counter insurgency were violated. Most of the money committed, especially by the US, flowed back to the donor country. ANA received by far the largest share (most probably because of the interest of the defence lobby), and there is no chance that in the absence of an all embracing political dispensation it can provide security outside the big cities. There, too, its shield can be breached. In keeping with the famous Churchillian edict, the American were most of the time exhausting (unworkable) options. The BSA may have been the last of these gimmicks. Going by the conventional wisdom and the post-Soviet withdrawal experience, the force that enjoyed freedom of maneuver – the Mujahideen then and the Taliban now – had the advantage.

**In the last couple of years
Islamabad has
established good rapport
with all the Afghan
factions.**

After Afghanistan, Pakistan would suffer the most from the likely turmoil. To its credit, it has been positioning itself well to facilitate an intra-Afghan dialogue, if and when the right opportunity offered itself. In the last couple of years Islamabad has established good rapport with all the Afghan factions, and has also tried to mend fences in the Region to get help from the neighboring countries. Since second guessing the Afghans is a dicey affair, there is no assurance that Pakistan would succeed. If the new regime in Kabul can convince the Taliban that a mutual settlement would be followed by withdrawal of all foreign military presence, that would offer the best chance for peace and stability.