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Post 2014-Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

The year 2014 expects to witness the pulling out of foreign forces from Afghanistan, however not absolutely. The defence matters of the country then be relinquished to Afghan National Security Forces (ANF), despite the fact that the White House does not have a unanimous opinion on the remaining numbers of troops in Afghanistan after 2014 and that number varies from 20,000 to 30, 000. However, the most important issue today has become how Afghanistan will tackle its security forces in the presence of militants and keeping in view this scenario, what would be the role of Pakistan and the US? The paper will study the pitfalls and factors, regarding the possible scenarios in Afghanistan and Pakistan following the ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014? The paper shall also discuss how the interests and actions of other powers in the wider region around Afghanistan will determine the outcomes in the coming years?

Existing Scenario

As the withdrawal time of foreign troops approaches, the existing regional developments signify that many foreign countries are keen to help Post 2014 Afghanistan, through “Money, Equipment and Training”, though at present 66, 000 troops are there in Afghanistan (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/15/us-afghanistan-usa-security-idUSBRE8AE0WI20121115>). In Lisbon Summit, Hamid Karzai, and Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary General, showed their consent on a "transition plan" for Afghanistan which was supposed to phase in the relinquish of the country's provinces to Afghan security forces from the year 2011, carrying out the move within four years (*Guardian*, 2010, November 20).

The Afghan army has been set up to take over the country's security as NATO's 2014 cut-off date approaches. The “Peace Process Roadmap to 2015” also anticipates negotiations late in 2013 between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Contentiously, too, it offers that the “Taliban ought to share power by

receiving “non-elected positions”, for instance “provincial governorships and other regional positions”. The outcome, in presumption, would be to relinquish “control of the south and the east of Afghanistan”. The Taliban could also acquire “ministerial positions in Kabul without winning any election”.

Today the foremost important issue which is under discussion by Obama’s administration is none other than “number of troops”. While on the other hand, Kabul government is getting ready for arranging peace talks with the Taliban and “backdoor diplomacy” in order to bring some of the “good” Taliban on discussion table so that a “power-sharing formula” may be worked out for post 2014; and also, Pakistan is on “tenterhooks to (be allowed to) play its role in Afghanistan” (Rashid, 2012). The role of Pakistan and the present condition of economy of Afghanistan can not be negated when one talks about the scenario, expected to prevail in the aftermath of 2014. The main reason behind these two factors is that if the allocation of funds is not fairer and more impartial, long term stability in Afghanistan remains dubious. While on the other hand, the US can never meet its “Strategic Interests” in the region, excluding which might create the security problems in the long run (Chayes, 2012).

Currently there are four diverse kinds of coalitions struggling for power and control in Afghanistan which are mainly;

- i. **The Ruling Alliance** - which includes President Hamid Karzai, the groups of “Hizb-e-Islami, Marshal Faheem, Karim Khalili”, etc.
- ii. **Change and Hope Coalition** - Led by Non-Pashtuns which includes “Dr. Abdullah, Yonus Qanooni, Ahmad Behzad, Nur Muhammad Atta”, etc.
- iii. **National Front Coalition** - Led by Non-Pashtuns which includes “Dostum, Ahmad Zia Massoud, Mohaqiq, Amrullah Saleh”, etc.
- iv. **Haq and Adalat (Truth and Justice Coalition)** - Which includes “Hanif Atmar, Azita Rahfat”, etc.

It might be possible that the two alliances led by non-Pashtuns perhaps collaborate in order to “fight the others in the subsequent elections” as both these groups yearn for a decentralized structure in Kabul whereas the remaining two wish for a “unitary, centralized state machinery” (Gupta, Behuria, Chandra & Pattanik, 2012). There is an unpretentious “ratcheting up” of movement towards resolution with the Taliban, despite the fact that many analysts are cynical and doubt whether any contract can really be accomplished within such a restricted span of time prior to the exit, and nevertheless the Taliban have copiousness of enticements in order to anticipate actual meetings and wait out the United States, many agree that Pakistan still holds the key to an accord (<http://tacstrat.com/content/index.php/2012/12/20/pakistans-role-in-afghanistans-peace-process/>).

Divergent Agendas of the Regional Players

In the imminent year, Afghanistan will carry on the preparations in order to capture its security as international troops exert to accomplish their “pullout, set

for 2014". As this comes about, China, Iran and Pakistan will be progressively more alert on the future of their war-torn neighbor. However with the presence of 300,000 national security forces, still Taliban and AL Qaeda threats might emerge. Due to trust building between Pakistan and China, Afghans is keen to have Chinese interest in their country. Iranian interest in post 2014 Afghanistan can not be brushed aside but the future will decide. How Afghanistan, its neighbors and allies lend a hand on all these problems (Behn, 2012). The players are alert enough as the draw-down deadline approaches owing to a flimsy state with a wishy-washy financial system, an unstable government, profound ethnic fault-lines and an army with inadequate power.

Pakistan's Engagements

As the year 2014 approaches, the role of Pakistan would become very much critical and significant as well along with its involvement at peace talks regarding Afghan stability. It seems that Pakistan aspires to have a "friendly" Afghanistan (Rakisits, 2012). Pakistan has been blamed that it treats Taliban as its "proxies in Afghanistan", and as a barricade against Indian sway. However Afghan officials maintain that currently "Pakistanis are less suspicious about India". Possibly Pakistan's larger apprehension at this moment is to unearth ways in order to cope with the radical hazard at home and anarchy over the border in Afghanistan would make that inflexible. As far as US authorities are concerned, they want that Taliban must cut-off their knots with Al Qaeda.

And henceforth, it may show the way to special considerations over the "Western-style Afghan constitution". What may come next is a challenge to revitalize the Qatar dialogues, possibly involving the contentious discharge of Taliban from Guantánamo Bay. An attempt is in progress to modify a "United Nations blacklist of Taliban members", in order to permit the movement's envoys to travel (<http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21568428-signs-grow-renewed-if-cautious-enthusiasm-talks-afghan-taliban-table>)

The West has shown sanguinity as far as Pakistan's efforts are concerned in coming across a "diplomatic ending to the Afghan conflict". In the post 2014, Pakistan not only views its role in "discussions" but also it aspires to curtail Indian existence and confine its growing control in Afghanistan in the future. "The post-withdrawal Afghanistan should not be an opponent, if it is not going to be an ally" (Khattak, 2012). Hence, when the world talks about peace in Afghanistan, it is talking about achieving 'relative peace'. The next question is what the level of trouble in Afghanistan will be. Will the government in Kabul be able to handle that level of trouble? What seems probable is that buttressed by a minimal US rapid reaction force, an internationally sponsored-cum-legitimised government will stay in Kabul, whether it is of Pakistan's liking or not, to keep braving the (bad) Taliban trouble. Regarding the second point, signs are in abundance indicating that, for all practical

purposes, Pakistan has been sidelined in Afghanistan's affairs. It is despite the rhetoric made by the international players that Pakistan has a 'particular role to play' in establishing peace and stability in Afghanistan. The policy of Pakistan to boycott international conferences on Afghanistan has backfired. Pakistan used to assume that no progress in Afghanistan could take place without its consent and approval. Pakistan could have seen the worsening position of its isolation, had the NATO supply line not been reliant on its land. Pakistan has realized its discomfited position and has taken a few following steps to preclude its alienation;

1. Pakistan has released the Taliban prisoners, though of the mid-level, on the requests of the High Peace Council of Afghanistan and Afghan Foreign Minister Zalmay Rassoul after they visited Pakistan recently, to facilitate negotiations between the good Taliban and the Kabul government.
2. Pakistan has shown its willingness to organize a Joint Ulema Conference in Afghanistan in January next year for denouncing militancy and suicide bombing in the name of religion.
3. The presence of both the chief of army staff and the foreign minister of Pakistan at the Brussels Conference (held in December 2012) indicates that Pakistan is ready to reconcile with the international players to be relevant to the post-2014 situation in Afghanistan.
4. The urgency on the part of Pakistan to stay relevant can be gauged by the fact that instead of Afghanistan seeking the strategic partnership agreement with Pakistan, it is Pakistan yearning for one with Afghanistan, which has already signed similar agreements with the US and India.

Pakistan's concern regarding Afghanistan is that after 2014 there should be no security (or power) vacuum left that could suck Pakistan in. In fact, the world is taking care of that disquiet. Interestingly, the world is apprehensive that if a power vacuum emerges after 2014, it may be of Pakistan's making. The way the world see Pakistan's relevance to Afghanistan is that the former has influence over the Taliban, who have the potential to disrupt the Kabul government after 2014. Hence, the world is facing two challenges: how to tackle the Taliban and how to tackle Pakistan. To goad (or coerce) Pakistan to play a positive role (or to be part of the solution), both NATO and the EU have come into action. While NATO is ready to engage Pakistan in a strategic partnership agreement, the EU is also engaging it for five years in socio-economic areas. The EU is also offering the Autonomous Trade Preferences (ATPs) to Pakistan. In fact, the countries of the EU are trying to convey Pakistan their resolve to settle the Afghanistan conundrum. In that resolve, there is hidden a caveat for Pakistan: do not meddle in Afghanistan's affairs.

The Kabul government is already hostile to Pakistan and leveling one accusation or another at Pakistan. Recently, Turkey has offered to host a Pak-Afghan summit to remove mutual mistrust, which has grown owing to the failed assassination attempt on the spy chief of Afghanistan launched by a Taliban peace

envoy as Kabul claims that it had been planned in Pakistan. This strategy of incrimination is also a part of the preparation for post-2014 Afghanistan when the blame for the failure of the Kabul government could be laid on Pakistan. This is the next reason why Pakistan should actively participate in the peace process and let Afghanistan stay as an international liability and pace of withdrawal” (Chayes, 2012).

The period of post 2014 will put Pakistan into vital role both in terms of negotiations with Taliban and relations with them. Undeniably, there are “historical, ethnic, operational and strategic grounds” why Pakistan should have a place at the negotiating table.

- The post-2014 scenario for Pakistan would be tough in the presence of drone attacks which have been permitted to be done more frequently in the tribal areas of Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan desires to have curtailed Indian role in Afghanistan vis –a- viz its security.
- It goes beyond saying that the “regional and international actors” aspire for their key role in the formation of a concluding accord. Here the position of Pakistan becomes more vital in “negotiations”.
- Despite the fact that the dynamic involvement of Pakistan in the dialogues initiating a final accord between the “key internal and external actors involved in Afghanistan does not unavoidably promise that there will be peace after the coalition combat troops leave in 2014; rather it simply signifies that it does mean that if Pakistan is barred from the discussion round, peace in Afghanistan would be a far cry in post 2014. Pakistan is more than simply another one of Afghanistan’s five neighbors. These dynamics underline the rationales why Pakistan will require to be caught up in the discussions showing the way up to the end game in Afghanistan and what Pakistan would like to accomplish in a post-2014 Afghanistan.

India

Indo-Afghanistan relations date back to Ancient Hindu Kingdoms that existed during the time of the military conquests of Alexander the Great (Chandrasekaran, 2011). There have been strong links between the governments through out history except a brief intrusion when Taliban ruled Afghanistan (1996-2001), though been a devoted supporter of Northern Alliance. Encouraged by the US and its NATO allies as they get ready to withdraw in 2014, India and Afghanistan are intensifying their knots, to the “frustration of their neighbor sandwiched in-between”. Both countries have already signed a strategic partnership on October 4, 2011. The agreement was signed following the assassination of former President Burhanuddin Rabbani (September 2011) and the successive delay of settlement talks with the Taliban, giving rise to a new thinking that it was signed owing to isolate Pakistan (D’Souza, 2011). More than 100 Afghan officers are already attending Indian military colleges, with the number set to rise. In fact, “the next

round of the age-old battle for influence in Afghanistan has initiated". In economic terms, India is already one of the biggest players in Afghanistan. It has guaranteed and depleted \$2bn aid over the last decade in the name of infrastructure, power stations and even the Afghan parliament (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-18622573>). India is already providing training assistance to Afghan administrators, teachers, medical staff and officer cadets, but only within India. Though the Indian private sector has invested only USD 25 million so far, this is set to change as new investments worth USD 10-12 billion are in the pipeline.

In Post 2014, the Indian interest in Afghanistan is interrelated with the supremacy and wealth in the Central Asian States. Indian aspiration is to exploit Afghanistan as a doorway to Central Asia to for its massive mineral reservoirs. The jiffy has approached when Pakistan is supposed to take up the realistic tactics in order to curtail emergent Indian influence and get the most out of its innate geo-strategic potency (Parween, 2012).

China

China and Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership in 2012 which signifies Chinese interests in Post 2014 Afghanistan. Keeping in view the fact how China's domestic security will have an effect on it in post 2014. It fears that if Taliban come to power, it will have a great impact on the "separatist group, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, led by ethnic Uighurs, a Turkic-speaking, largely Muslim people in the autonomous western region of Xinjiang". While on the other hand, China is already investing in Afghanistan, despite the fact that it will keep up with its policy of "Non-Interference". Its better example could be seen from the fact that the Chinese government has rejected to contribute to a \$4.1 billion fund for supporting the Afghan Army in post 2014, however has presented an offer to instruct a tiny number of Afghan soldiers, mainly in anti-terrorism techniques (Perlez, 2012). As far as Chinese policies towards Afghanistan are concerned, it goes beyond saying that China is a major stakeholder in the stability of Afghanistan. The Central Asia gas pipeline is only the most vibrant illustration of China's rising stakes (and its new vulnerabilities) in that county. Meanwhile, there are also signs that China is re-evaluating and reconsidering its responsibility as far as Central Asia is concerned, against the conditions of the renewed thrust by Moscow on Eurasian integration (with apathetic fallouts until now) and the departure of Western forces from Afghanistan and the ebb of US concern in the region that may proceed. Afghanistan pledges to be a "stage" where China can work with the US on regional security issues. Though having conflicts over few issues with US, China carries the geopolitical influence that can build all the disparities to the victory of the US regional policy.

In the post 2014, China will stride cautiously in assuming any major responsibility in order to bring harmony in Afghanistan, yet it intends to keep at bay from the wreckage of the war, security vacuity and show a low-esteem to a

long-term US troop presence in Afghanistan which are too near to its borders with the Central Asian region. The point is, while China would give humbug to envisage a key role for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in stabilizing post-2014 Afghanistan, its actual enunciation remains to be on the bilateral proposals. From the US perspective, this has repercussions for the great-power enmity in Central Asia.

China is ever more restructuring Central Asia to turn into its backyard rather than Russia's, and this will carry some regional responsibilities that China has not yet figured out how to address and for that very reason; China will have to craft an appropriate strategy for Central Asia (Bhadrakumar, 2013).

Iran

Iran being the direct neighbor of Afghanistan has links with it since 6th century BC. Since American invasion in Afghanistan, It has contributed half a billion dollars in humanitarian aid. Afghanistan is significant for Iran, both geo-strategically and geo-economically. Therefore, it does not only aspire to generate an economic sphere of influence and change Herat into a Buffer Zone but also wants to avoid direct conflict with the superpower along with the diminution of gush of Narcotics to Iran (Milani, 2006). Though Iran has “strategic stakes” in Afghanistan yet Afghanistan’s power game is considered as a direct threat by Iran. So any instability in Afghanistan would not be in the Iranian interest. Nevertheless, Iran is implausible to join a UN peacekeeping force and for its part the international community would much rather do without Iranian troops in such a force. Iran could contribute by allowing the use of the road from Chahbahar port to Zaranj in order to launch a new road for logistics supplies. Such a budge will significantly diminish the current reliance on the two ground routes that pass through Quetta and Peshawar in Pakistan. Nevertheless, this can take place simply if the United States restores its relations. It is crystal clear that Iran seeks to be a key player in its neighborhood and looks forward so that its role as a regional leader is accepted and acknowledged.

Russia and Central Asia

Russian concern in Afghanistan can be observed from Bon 1 to Bonn II. Russia’s support for the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) by permitting the “supplies” through its land reveals its strategic interest in the county. From Russian outlook, Afghanistan dwells in an imperative “geo-strategic, geopolitical and geo-economic position”. The geo-strategic position of Afghanistan is such that it ties significant regions like Central Asia and the Middle East with South and East Asia. Due to Russia’s innate area of influence in Central Asia, it desires Afghanistan to assume the responsibility of a barricade which will defend its vulnerable southern border from illegal narcotics and radicalism, which

intimidate the stability of Russia and its strategic allies in Central Asia. The geo-economic importance is born out by Afghanistan as a basis of “crucial hydro-carbon reserves, iron-ore reserves, copper, gold, lithium” and so on (Pawar, 2011).

However the diversified Russian and Western opinions on Afghan issue is intricate by a “New Great Game” in order to have monopoly over Central Asia. Within its structure, Russia and the West normally observe the circumstances as a “zero-sum game”. The new Great Game is hazardous not simply because of the collision of interests of the actors concerned with it. There is also a discrepancy of principles and ideological viewpoints between the West and Russia that reminds of the “Soviet-British contention of the 1920-1930-s and the Cold War-time conflict (from the late 1940-s to the end of the 1980-s). Russia and West (especially US and UK), have a diversified geographical stance on Central Asian development prospects. These situations have emerged owing to their explicit objectives and unambiguous historical practices. These dissimilarities are too imperative since it might be understood that the implications of “conventional geographical interests” will develop in case of severe worsening of defense conditions in Afghanistan. Another reason for Russian interest is that it has ethnic similarities with Northern Afghanistan, along with “economic and security interests and of its historical and cultural bindings with this region”. Owing to this particular concern, Russia intends to soothe the circumstances around Afghanistan. If it has learnt anything from history, it would never send its troops on Afghan land. Many Russian experts think that if in the post 2014 Afghanistan turns into worse condition, then the reinstallation of a new “buffer zone in Northern Afghanistan” can turn out to be Russia’s major concern. Nevertheless, there always persist the menace that diverse as well as similar geographical priorities can cause ferocious enmity between external players in Central Asia and Afghanistan (Kazantsev, 2012).

Russian interest in Afghanistan after 2014 would enhance certainly. This country has at all times been in the “precinct of Soviet and Russian concerns”. For instance, on “27 March 1919, the government of the Russian Federation was the first of all other states to have officially recognized the independence and sovereignty of Afghanistan”; while even today “an ordinary Afghan supports the return of Russian Federation too”. The opening of Russian Cultural Centre in 2014 is vivid example how Russia will be making an effort to extend its influence. The most important track of Russia’s passive revisit to Afghanistan is in the form of financial support and investment in infrastructure, which was constructed by Soviet specialists almost completely and is still retained with the assistance of Soviet technology (http://english.pravda.ru/world/asia/20-11-2012/122866-russia_afghanistan-0/). The implications of the ostensible “Northern Route” to carry both the forces and cargoes of the coalition forces in Afghanistan via Russia will simply grow up in the days to come. Moscow claims for making efforts in order to avert Afghanistan from spiraling into a breeding ground of global terrorism once again and does not crave it to remain a world drug lab. Moreover, it does not necessitate the political hotness in Central Asia to go up above the critical

point of self-ignition, when a word dropped by somebody may trigger a fire storm in the entire region between India and Russia (Duz, 2012). Russia will have to keep a check on fearsome monetary contenders in Afghanistan like China, which recently outbid Russian companies on the Ainak copper reserves, one of the biggest in the world and were first time surveyed by Russia three decades ago. Afghanistan can also facilitate Russia in branching out its energy exports by granting right of entry to South Asia and China through its land. The latest curiosity presented by Russia in the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan and India) gas pipeline can be noticed in this perspective. Russia will look forward to be a vigorous competitor in determining Afghanistan's post-war strategic milieu. It will extend its existence in Afghanistan and reconstruct the country in order to chase its own interests in the region. In the longer term, Russia can do one of two things:

1. It may strive to restore the Northern Alliance in order to restrain the expansion of Taliban and international coalition behind it. In so doing, it may generate a barricade in Northern Afghanistan.
2. It can either prop up the endeavors of Afghan government in order to reach a political accord, which might essentially cause the come back of Taliban, and thus Russia will have to arrive at a transitory concord with them. Consequently, the path Russia will opt is a "matter of time and bank on both the domestic progress in Afghanistan and the part of global players (Pawar, 2011).

It goes beyond saying that Russia and the CARs will be the main actors along with a massive stake in Afghanistan's future stability. The "accord signed by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan with the NATO-ISAF forces in June 2012" for authorizing military hardware to be carried out of Afghanistan as component of the draw-down is the most vital dispensation and an indication of their aspiration in order to compose an evocative role to conflict resolution. Russia signed a similar agreement in early-July 2012. Nonetheless, Russia and the CARs are dubious to go so far as to join the fight against the Taliban by contributing troops to a stabilization force.

Post 2014- Governance

Together with a crystal clear structure for fair dealing; unrelenting socio-economic growth; and a protected surroundings for the first two to prosper, are the three pillars of a flourishing counter-insurgency drive. In Afghanistan, the "post-ISAF security situation is liable to drag out of control if additional security preparations are not envisaged quickly and get underway swiftly together with its neighbors (Kanwal, 2012).

Analyst Saifullah Khalid asserts in a report that after the 2014 pullout of the foreign forces, Blackwater plans to broaden operations in Afghanistan by setting up anti-Taliban Pashtun groups in order to protect the US interests, as Blackwater

plans to stir civil war in Afghanistan. He further says that all commanders of the US Special Forces have been asked to gather in Afghanistan in March 2013 for devising a comprehensive plan to provoke civil war in Afghanistan and gain control over the country relying on the US special operation forces and in collaboration with Blackwater. Khalid added that the US forces need at least two bases in Pakistan to accomplish their mission and Blackwater has bought the real estate surrounding the Kabul airport to deploy its special operation forces through its agents who dress like Afghans and are fluent in Afghan language. The report said that the firm has allocated \$22million for setting up the base around Kabul airport and will receive more funds in 2015 (As cited in *Washington Times*, 2012).

The year 2014 is a source of anxiety in Afghanistan and a burning topic globally. The twin scenarios of a civil war breaking out and the takeover by Taliban according to them are detached from the realities on the ground, as the country has been transformed drastically and the political actors have undergone change. There has been a transformation of fundamentals in the country that would have a bearing on the future of the country.

1. The constitutional order that was crafted in 2004 has increasingly internalized itself.
2. Taliban as an insurgent group and the people affiliated with them are reaching an exhaustion point. Taliban is no longer a cohesive force and has lost its assets. Although, the myth of the people around which the organization was formed remains but the capability of force no longer exists.
3. The dual transformation of the political elite along with demographic shift in the country has taken place. In addition, the main challenge in 2014 for Afghanistan is the political transition in the country rather than the NATO forces withdrawal. That contradictory concern of different regional countries would become the main obstacle in finding a settlement in Afghanistan. Failure is also a real possibility as the drawdown of ISAF forces accelerates in 2013 and 2014; there is a real risk that the ANSF will lose ground to insurgency. Afghan themselves are confused and the present government has so far not been able to strike deep roots. Although Taliban have been unable to hold ground yet, they have exhibited the capability to strike back anytime anywhere. The elements of best case scenario post 2014 would include the continuance of the Bonn era political framework, with the holding of a reasonably free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections in 2014 and bringing a representative government to power that would have respect domestically and internationally. This, in turn, would require the continuance of the support of the International Community towards Afghanistan's security, stability and economy.

But on the other hand, the likelihood of Taliban coming to power and the eruption of a civil war are low; as and when the western troops pull out the major

objection of the Taliban would be removed and hence would have no excuse to remain in an offensive mode. As far as the ideology of driving the Taliban is concerned, it may be assumed that although the leadership of Taliban was ideologically driven yet the majority of the forces are driven by the western presence. Hence, the ANSF will not face a united and ideologically motivated enemy. At present US relations with Pakistan are perking up. U.S. can not depart steeply when the Taliban and leave again to fill the void. Washington will permit the circumstances on the ground to decide the speed of U.S. extraction. It must be comprehensible to the US that, even if not caught up in the operational warfare directly after 2014, it will still deepness in embassies and economic and force residual is focused on performance counterterrorism And provide assistance and advice to the safety Afghan (<http://osamabinladen012.wordpress.com/pakistans-role-in-post-war-afghanistan/>).

The general elections in Afghanistan in 2014 are being observed as a larger prospect for contributing a broader room to the ‘good’ Taliban so that they could be able to run affably the post-2014 dealings of Afghanistan. But one thing remains very important that post-2014 Afghanistan might not come up to the expectations as a group of the Taliban will be definitely in the struggle to restore their fame that was observed in the past during their rule over the country. All parties, regional and international, engaged in Afghanistan appreciate the reality that creating a trouble-free post-2014 Afghanistan is still an uphill task. History indicates that Afghanistan is a land of upheaval, intrigue and revolt.

Further, the Afghan way of government is rooted in totalitarianism. It is its tribal culture that overwhelms all kinds of ideologies. Afghanistan has yet to reconcile with democracy thrust upon it by the post-2001 realities.

Some people consider that democracy is the third ideology (and not a system of government) being imposed on Afghanistan. The real test of the viability of democracy in Afghan culture would be when democracy is allowed to interact freely with tribal culture. Apparently, the tribal culture of Afghanistan is all set to militate against democracy. Afghanistan may consume decades to come to terms with democracy, which is yet to descend from the central level to the provincial and local levels. Even at the central level, democracy has yet to establish its credibility and perhaps relevance.

Future Prospects

1. Emergence of Ethnic Divergence and Political Shakiness

The wide rearrangement of political forces implies that a political segregation between Pashtun and non-Pashtun possibly will initiate the ethnic divergence and

political shakiness, conditioned if the incorporation of the Taliban into the Pashtun-heavy central government in Kabul takes place. The fact can not be negated that Tajiks, Uzbeks and the Hazaras already feel that Karzai has conferred an open rein to Pashtun nationalists who are unreceptive to the emotions of other ethnic groups.

2. Reconciliation with Taliban

The entire course of action in post 2014 is going to be much chaotic despite the fact that it is good enough to the international arena. Whereas on the other side, Taliban feel themselves victorious and do not want any settlement on the provisions delineated by the “Karzai government, obedience to the Constitution and abandonment of cruelty”. The Afghan government remains paranoid over the plans of US and Pakistan. The discussions between the US and the Taliban have not accomplished anything since the US has been hesitant over the release of few Taliban leaders as maintained by their preliminary claims. While on the other hand, Pakistan desires to direct the track of dialogue through the Taliban representatives reliable to it. The route to reintegration which might have formed the beginning for greater understanding has dwindled owing to the dearth of a visibly sketched arrangement of “action and institutional support”. The High Peace Council has been unsuccessful and continuing negotiation by countries like Turkey and Germany has not made a good deal of evolution.

3. Drugs Issue

Not only that the issue has remained unsettled to date but also the endeavors in order to curb the production of drugs and cut back narco-trafficking have been unsuccessful. The massive vested interests have emerged in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia so that the drug trafficking from Afghanistan could be made possible. Drugs will slash into the societal, financial and political structure of Afghanistan in the years to come. Since the Taliban are reliant on drugs money currently, they are dubious to acknowledge any international struggle in order to impede drugs production in the short term.

4. Weariness among Pashtuns

Most of the Pashtun population in South has a sense of apathy as far as the chronic state of vagueness in Afghanistan is concerned. However, the Taliban keep on the recruitment from among the younger population in these areas, despite the fact that if they have been defamed to some level as “ideologies’ play a significant role in the presence of unemployment. The dream of a new Afghanistan appears to be inspiring people in the metropolitan regions and this is gradually infiltrating to the periphery also.

5. Enhanced Role of Regional Powers

In the post-2014 state of affairs, the role of regional powers will be enlarged. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has recognized Afghanistan as its observer member which has proved itself tangential as yet, now it is preparing itself to presuppose a larger task in Afghanistan. As worldwide foreign interest has been at high, following the exit of foreign troops from Afghanistan, China has signed a series of agreements with Afghanistan and expects to maintain its policy of “resource mobilization” through “investment in mining and communications”, and guarantees to “facilitate, instruct, support and equip Afghan police” (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/09/2012923522833684.html>).

However the question of security remains the overriding issue. The SCO countries do not have the capital in order to use up in Afghanistan nevertheless they can present support for “capacity-building” (Gupta, et.al, 2012).

6. Good Relations with Central Asia

There exists likelihood that Afghanistan will develop good relations with Central Asia in the post-2014 phase as there is least probability that Afghanistan might come out as a “Transit Nucleus” between the Indian Sub-Continent and Central Asia. Apart from Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline, it can produce considerable profits from “overland trade”. As China is mounting its concern in edifying communication system in the region in broad-spectrum, and specifically in Afghanistan, in addition to Pakistan’s confrontation to allow India transit through its land, Afghanistan may perhaps turn out to be more assimilated with Central Asia than South Asia.



http://www.isgs.pk/project_detail.php?project_id=8

7. Cooperation between Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

There has always been a clash between both of these “competing military alliances” and Russia has many a time asked America for the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan but America has not paid any attention to its demand. But now it looks that in post 2014, there could be more collaboration between both military alliances. The Russians and the Chinese have become acquainted with the fact that NATO could be used as a future security for Afghanistan despite the bitter reality that its face is appalling. On one hand, there is China which has been depending greatly on the safety measures presented by global powers for its investments in Afghanistan. While on the other side, Russia recognizes the unfavorable outcomes of a fundamental privilege in Kabul and will hold up any future US-led endeavors to make available the security to a moderate and democratic government in Afghanistan. Thus, collaboration among opponents is likelihood.

8. Development in Social Order

There have been some remarkable accomplishments in Afghan society which can not be ignored, especially girls’ education and security situation in northern and western parts is not horrific. Apart from that, much of the development has taken place due to foreign aid. Still the fact can not be negated that there are numerous institutional flaws which definitely should be dealt with (**Gupta et.al, 2012**). There remains a willingness among Afghan, though limited, yet they want US role as a “long-term partner” in post 2014. America has affirmed Afghanistan as its Non-NATO ally so that the US may help the country from foreign interference particularly Iran and Pakistan. There have been talks between “Afghanistan's High Peace Council and senior Pakistani military and government officials” that the impasse over dialogues with the Taliban must be shattered; where Pakistan showed its consent to let loose quite a few Taliban detainees, with the hope that this shift might bring Taliban ion discussion table (Behn, 2012).

A Strategic Partnership Agreement with Kabul was signed in May 2012, which signified the presence of American troops in Afghanistan after 2014 as advisors and trainers. It consists of joint obligations in the following fields;

- The Democratic principles will be defended and endorsed
- Long-Term Security will be provided on developed techniques
- Regional Security and Cooperation will be strengthened and highlighted
- Social and Economic expansion will be introduced
- Afghan Institutions and Governance will be made stronger

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/01/fact-sheet-us-afghanistan-strategic-partnership-agreement>)

9. Issue of Legal Jurisdiction

The issue of the “legal jurisdiction” over the remaining US troops after 2014 remains significant though preliminary talks has been made. Whereas, the US has claimed that any troops serving in Afghanistan after combat forces withdraw at the end of 2014, will be subject to the American, not Afghan, legal justice system. But Afghan President has been firm that the troops should be subjected to Afghan justice after 2014. But with the passage of time, Hamid Karzai is softening its stance and declares that if the autonomy of Afghanistan and its law is maintained by the US., then troops may remain under American legal jurisdiction. “Once those conditions are accomplished by the United States, Afghanistan is ready to think about [legal] immunity for them” (Zucchini, 2012).

10. Status of ANSF and Expected Impact

No tactics have yet been prepared to set up the post–exit measures in order to supplement the abilities of the Afghan security forces (ANSF) which is already lacking in “weapons, equipments and inadequately trained”. Therefore, there remains a suspicion about independent responsibility of ANSF for security by the end of 2014. Once the foreign troops leave the country, a security vacuum will prevail, predominantly in the south-eastern and southern provinces, and Taliban may possibly fill up the gap, henceforth, leading country towards a new civil war. The Chicago Summit (May 20, 2012) though claimed that unless Peace is brought in the “Heart of Asia”, the region’s peace and stability would be a far cry; it did not deal with the topic of leaving behind a security vacuum and the role that key regional actors could play (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87593.htm?mode=pressrelease). This obtrusive blunder will bear out very pricey in the long term for regional harmony and safety. In this backdrop, several regional neighbors of Afghanistan will endorse their core national interests and struggle for authority by sustaining the warring groups. Western and regional players will necessitate putting up Pakistan’s core interests in order to search for an enduring way out to the Afghan conflict. The NATO-ISAF strategy to “clear-hold-transfer-exit” has just moderately thrived in attaining its political and military objectives. However security deficit can be filled to a greater degree by the neighbors of Afghanistan if they can be swayed to recognize the duty, together with “contributing troops to a UN-mandated peacekeeping force”. The need of the hour is that three countries predominately, India, Iran and Pakistan, being the “key actors in the region” must work collectively in order to contribute to peace and stability (Kanwal, 2012).

Conclusion

1. Regional co-operation is very much essential as far as Afghan problem is concerned so that without touching its territorial veracity, Afghanistan could maintain its affable relations with the rest of world.
2. The regional apprehensions of its neighbors like Pakistan, Iran and China must be met up. For this very purpose, SCO must develop into a platform, as it incorporates all the stakeholders of the Afghanistan quandary.
3. No country should be allowed to interfere in Afghanistan in order to chase its own vested interests.
4. The incorporated policies must be re-evaluated for Afghanistan and Pakistan.
5. There should be more forbearance for the traditional Sharia laws along with the blend of the contemporary judicial system and traditional system so that it could be made to make it feasible.
6. Regional actors must show more concern in the non-traditional security hazards like drug market, counterbalancing regional radical factions. Moreover, it should not remain at the mercy of US over such issues.
7. Much importance should be given in the areas of trade and investment in Afghanistan.

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South Asian Studies 28 (1)

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