# "TELLING THE STORY"

Sources of Tension in Afghanistan & Pakistan:
A Regional Perspective (2011-2016)

**Emma Hooper (ed.)**

CIDOB
BARCELONA
CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS

NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

# CONTENTS

**Safiya Aftab** is an Islamabad-based consultant with degrees in economics and public administration, who has worked extensively with a wide range of development agencies and research institutions. Her work covers economics, governance and political economy issues. She has worked, among other, with the Asian Development Bank, Pakistan; the World Food Programme, and has graduate degrees in economics from the Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad; the London School of Economics; and in public administration from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

**Raza Rumi Ahmad** is a Pakistani political analyst, journalist, columnist and broadcaster. A former governance specialist with the Asian Development Bank, he is currently Scholar in Residence at Ithaca College, USA, where he teaches on the Honors Programme. He was a fellow at New America Foundation (2014); United States Institute of Peace (Sept 2014-March 2015) and a visiting fellow at National Endowment for Democracy. He is published in Foreign Policy, the Huffington Post, the New York Times, the Diplomat, CNN and Al Jazeera, the Hindu, and the Express Tribune Pakistan.

**Masood Aziz** is a former senior Afghan diplomat, a foreign policy analyst, author and lecturer. He is a contributor to the book "The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia", and has published with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Swedish Defense Research Agency, the Council on Foreign Relations, and PRMI. He frequently appears on BBC World Service TV & Radio, Al Jazeera English TV, BBC Arabic TV and CNN's GPS/Fareed Zakaria.

**Malaiz Daud** is an Afghan political analyst with an M.A. in Post-War Recovery from the University of York, former Chevening and OSI scholar and a Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) fellow. He is a member of the STAP RP project team, and a Research Associate of CIDOB. An organizer of Afghanistan's Constitutional Loya Jirga in 2004 and the Kabul Conference in 2010, he has also headed the Afghan Development Association (ADA) and the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) in Afghanistan. A founding member of the Afghan Youth Foundation for Unity (AYFU) and Young Leaders Forum (YLF); formerly an elected member of the Steering Committee of Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR); a member of Board of Directors of Human Rights Research; the Advocacy Consortium (HRRAC); the Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF) and the Peace Training and Research Organization (PTRO). He is currently pursuing a PhD on the nonviolent Khudai Khidmatgar Movement of Pashtuns from the Free University of Berlin with funding from the Berghof Foundation.

**Juan Garrigues** is a former Research Fellow of CIDOB, and a founding member of the STAP RP project team. He was a former Foreign Policy Advisor to the Office of the Prime Minister of Spain, and is currently a Special

Advisor to the Dialogue Advisory Group in Amsterdam. He graduated in International Politics from the University of Virginia; and has a Master's in International Studies from the Complutense University of Madrid. He was a researcher in the Area of Peace and Security in FRIDE, Madrid; a Project Manager in CITpax, and has worked in the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat of the United Nations. He has extensive on-the-ground experience as a long and short-term electoral observer (in Bosnia, Niger and Aceh, Indonesia); and worked with the NGO ACTED in Afghanistan. His main areas of interest are conflict mediation, peacekeeping operations, crisis management and fragile states, including Afghanistan and Libya. He is currently Special Adviser to the Dialogue Advisory Group, Amsterdam.

**Dr. Aziz Hakimi** is a Afghan political scientist with a PhD in development studies from the School of Oriental & African Studies, London University. He has been a guest researcher at the Christian Mikkelsen Institute in Norway, and was a former Director of a non-profit NGO - Future Generations in Afghanistan. He has worked as policy advisor for President Karzai in Afghanistan and as Human Rights Advisor with the United Nations in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Before joining Future Generations, he was Executive Director of the Killid Group, a local media organization based in Kabul. He was educated in India and South Africa and holds a Master's Degree in Conflict, Security and Development from King's College in London. He is currently a research associate (anthropology) at the University of Sussex.

**Hameed Hakimi** is a research associate of the Asia Programme at Chatham House, London and formerly a researcher at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. He has also worked at the British Refugee Council. His areas of expertise include politics and society in Afghanistan; FATA (Pakistan); Islam/Muslims in Britain; and refugees and asylum seekers in Britain.

**Barin Sultani Haymon** is an independent Afghan analyst, with a background in the non-profit sector. She holds an MSc in Comparative Politics (Conflict Studies) from the London School Â of Economics and obtained her BA in International Studies from Emory University in Atlanta, GA, with a focus on conflict resolution in the Middle East and Africa. She also completed a program at The Institute for International Mediation and Conflict Resolution (IIMCR), in conjunction with Erasmus University Rotterdam and The Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University.

**Dr. Emma Hooper** is Project Director and a founding member of the STAP RP project team, based in Madrid. She is a Senior Research Fellow Associate at CIDOB. She is a specialist in South Asia and the Middle East, with a degree in Middle Eastern History from the School of Oriental & African Studies, London, and a PhD from the London School of Economics. She has worked as an Independent Consultant for the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the UN, the OECD and bilateral government aid programmes, including in the areas of governance, socio-economic development and poverty reduction. She has taught business strategy at EADA business school in Barcelona; and teaches courses on international relations at the Instituto de Empresas, Madrid. She has lived in seven countries on four continents, including Kuwait, Lebanon, and Pakistan, where she was based full time from 2004-2008.

**Zahid Hussain** is an award-winning journalist and writer. He is a correspondent for The Times of London and The Wall Street Journal. He also has covered Pakistan and Afghanistan for several other international publications, including Newsweek, the Associated Press and The Economist. He is the author of two books: Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam (2007) and The Scorpion's Tail: The Relentless Rise of Islamic Militants in Pakistan (2010).

**Gabriel Reyes Legüen** is a member of the STAP RP project team, and an Associate Research Fellow of CIDOB: He is Director of Project Development at the Toledo Institute for Peace (CITpax) and holds degrees from the Universidad Pontificia Comillas (BA Law, Madrid), Cardiff Law School, and King's College London (MA International Peace and Security). He was Adviser on Foreign Policy in the Spanish Prime Minister's Office and has held a number of positions at CITpax in the Conflict Prevention and Resolution; and the Middle East and Mediterranean Programmes. Prior to joining CITpax, he worked as a researcher at the British Institute of International and Comparative Law, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS, London), the Political Committee of NATO Parliamentary Assembly (Brussels) as well as the Club of Madrid.

**Dr. Anatol Lieven** is former chair of international relations and terrorism studies in the War Studies Department at King's College London and a senior fellow of the New America Foundation in Washington DC. His areas of expertise include Islamist terrorism and insurgency; contemporary warfare; US and Western strategy; the countries of the former Soviet Union; and the Greater Middle East, especially Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. He is author of the book Pakistan: A Hard Country. He has been a senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and a senior research fellow at the New America Foundation. He currently teaches International Politics at Georgetown University in Qatar, and is writing a book on the history of the Pashtun ethnicity in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the context of the wider history and theoretical analysis of modern nationalism.

**H.E. Jawed Ludin is** a former Afghanistan Deputy Foreign Minister on Political Affairs. He has served as Ambassador of Afghanistan in Canada; and Ambassador of Afghanistan to Norway. He was Spokesperson for, and later Chief of Staff to President Karzai. He currently runs a number of private sector initiatives in Afghanistan, including ANHAM and Mithra Associates LLC.

**Senator Sherry Rehman** is a Pakistani politician, an award-winning political journalist and diplomat, who is a member of the Senate and Vice President of the Pakistan Peoples Party. She was Pakistan´s Ambassador to the US, was a former Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, and is the founding Chair and President of the Jinnah Institute, Islamabad. She co-chairs several Track Two strategic dialogues with India, and is Convenor of a similar dialogue process between Pakistan and Afghanistan. She lectures widely on strategic security challenges facing Pakistan.

**Dr. Thomas Ruttig** is founder, co-director and senior analyst of the Afghan Analysts Network. A fluent Pashto and Dari speaker, with a degree in Afghan studies from Humboldt University, Berlin, he has worked for UNSMA in Afghanistan, heading its Kabul office till 9/11; for UNAMA both

as a political affairs officer, and later as head of its Islamabad and Gardez offices; was a member of the UN delegation at the Bonn conference on Afghanistan in 2001 and an advisor to the Afghan Independent Emergency Loya Jirga Commission in 2002. A former Deputy of the Special Representative to the European Union for Afghanistan, he was a Visiting Fellow at the Berlin-based think tank SWP (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik/German Institute for International and Security Affairs). He publishes extensively on Afghanistan and the region.

**Dr. Susanne Schmeidl** is a scholar-practitioner working at the intersection of peace, security and development, focusing on migration and refugees; context-sensitive, participatory and inclusive development practice; early warning, conflict prevention and civilian peace building, with a cross-cutting focus on gender and civil society. Her current research focuses on civil society involvement in peace/statebuilding in Afghanistan, exploring local peace building infrastructures, and community/insurgency interactions.

**Michael Semple** is an Afghanistan and Pakistan expert, currently teaching at Queens University Belfast. He was former deputy to the European Union Special Representative to Afghanistan, and is a former fellow of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

**Abubakar Siddique** is a journalist and author specialising in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He edits RFE/RL's "Gandhara" website.  He has spent the past fifteen years researching and writing about security, political, humanitarian and cultural issues in Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Pashtun heartland where he was born. In addition to his reporting, Siddique has spoken at Western think tanks and has contributed articles, chapters and research papers to a range of publications.  Siddique's unique expertise is brought to bear in his book, The Pashtun Question: The Unresolved Key to the Future of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

**Ambassador Tine Mørch Smith** is Director General of the Department for Regional Affairs in the Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was formerly Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations.

**Ambassador Roberto Toscano** is a member of the STAP RP project team, and a Senior Research Fellow Associate of CIDOB. He was former Ambassador of Italy to Iran (2003-2008) and India (2008-2010). A former head of the Research and Planning Unit in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; a graduate in Law from the University of Parma, with a Master's in International Relations from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, Washington. A former Fellow at the Center for International Affairs of Harvard University and Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, in Washington, where he carried out a research study on Iran. He publishes regularly in Italy, the United States, Spain, France and India.

**Dr. Moeed Yusuf** is the Associate Vice President of the Asia Center at the U.S. Institute of Peace. His current research focuses on youth and democratic institutions in Pakistan, policy options to mitigate militancy in Pakistan and the South Asian region in general, and U.S. role in South

Asian crisis management.  He was a fellow at the Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future at the Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University, and concurrently a research fellow at the Mossavar-Rahmani Center at Harvard Kennedy School. He has also worked at the Brookings Institution. In 2007, he co-founded Strategic and Economic Policy Research, a private sector consultancy firm in Pakistan. He has consulted for a number of Pakistani and international organizations including the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, and the Stockholm Policy Research Institute, among others. From 2004-2007, he was a full-time consultant with the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan's premier development-sector think tank.

## Ms. Tine Mørch Smith

*Director General, Department for Regional Affairs,*
*Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

I t is with pleasure and interest that we observe the publication of the results of this long-standing research project by CIDOB on the sources of tension in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Both are countries of high priority for Norwegian foreign policy and the focus of the broad international effort to contribute to peace and stability in Afghanistan. Both countries remain of significant interest, even as we observe that the results of the combined international efforts have been decidedly mixed.

We took the decision to finance this research project in part because we found its proposed regional perspective to be of particular interest. In our view, a regional approach was likely a requirement for stabilization and peacemaking in the region. In this regard, we thought that research coming out of a Spanish think tank with which we had not collaborated with in the past and that made a point of working with analysts primarily from the region itself, would form a useful complement to the research coming out from research centers and think tanks in Norway and the English-speaking world.

Today, this assumption appears vindicated. CIDOB and its collaborators in the project have brought out a series of high-quality research papers comprising analysis and policy recommendations that go beyond the security scope prevalent in much research. The result is a highly interesting time series analysis of the evolving interests of the regional powers that enhances the understanding of the complexities of issues at play in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Norway is pleased to have been in a position to provide financial support to this project. We have appreciated the process of collaboration with Dr. Emma Hooper and the other talented researchers involved at, and with, CIDOB; and we commend their efforts to further our collective understanding of issues that are no less relevant today than when the research project was conceived.

Oslo, June 2016

# INTRODUCTION

## Dr. Emma Hooper

*Project Director Sources of Tension in Afghanistan & Pakistan:*
*A Regional Perspective*

At the time when the idea of a policy research project on Afghanistan and Pakistan arose in 2011, there had been little or no focus on analysing the impacts of the situation in Afghanistan and the declining security situation in Pakistan on the region; nor on what were the interests of the most-involved regional powers vis a vis the two countries, and how these might impact on domestic "flash points" in each. Analysis of Afghanistan and Pakistan had predominantly been emanating from the US and the UK, and it was considered that CIDOB, an independent European think tank located in Barcelona, was well placed to present a neutral, objective analysis of what was going on in the region. It was a key premise from the outset, that this "missing link" analysis should be firmly rooted in the region itself, and not be yet another superimposition of western analysis of eastern problems. Therefore, whilst the project has benefitted from the inputs of many international experts on the region, it is predominantly the voices of those from the region itself that have shaped the focus of attention of the project, and its outputs.

An important additional new paradigm that determined the project´s focus was the decision to examine the sources of domestic tension (SoTs) in Afghanistan and Pakistan, that had dimensions that go beyond the purely internal, and which had implications for the main five interested regional actors (India, Iran, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia) as well as internationally. Furthermore, events in one of the two countries has implications for the other. What happens in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) or Balochistan, does not stay in KP or Balochistan. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have become more than solely a national problem, drawing in international involvement and affecting regional interests as well, with inevitable blowback on Pakistan. The impact of the SoTs is thus deepened domestically and beyond, specifically because of the interests by concerned regional actors in how they play out. Afghanistan and Pakistan, though at times mutually hostile, are strongly inter-connected with one another, and both of them are the focus of regional interests whose strengths ebb and flow according to prevailing geopolitics, and the state of the SoTs themselves.

In order to make sense of these sources of tension and their regional dimensions, it was necessary to look to the region and its actors, to widen the picture and to bring in players without whom there could be no way forward, and few – if any – sustainable solutions. Enhancing the understanding of the interests of the regional powers and bringing into the picture those entities behind the apparent contenders for contested space, is an important analytical optic. This is because the way in which these different sets of interests intertwine with certain internal problems in both countries – which, it should be emphasised, are genuine, deep-rooted domestic issues that need to be addressed in and of themselves – is key to seeking constructive ways forward.

As noted in 2012 in the project document Mapping the Sources of Tension and the Interests of Regional Powers in Afghanistan and Pakistan "...... the very sources of tension that have for many years defined the internal dynamics of both countries are once again in flux. .....Tensions surrounding governance, social and economic issues, the conflict in Afghanistan, ethnicity and sectarianism, radicalisation and militancy have defined the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and with the rest of the region throughout the last decade. In both countries, state institutions have been strained in responding to these challenges..... A growing realisation on the extent of the challenges at hand and their interconnected nature with the region's stability, has led to increased dialogue and interaction between a range of concerned actors and communities."

Five years on, this still remains the case: in some ways, little has changed. What has changed is that the impact of geopolitical events taking place beyond the region are making themselves felt even more strongly at the domestic level in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Five main sources of tension with regional dimensions, experienced in both countries, were identified at the start of the project:

• Governance
• Radicalisation and militancy
• Socio-economic issues
• The conflict in Afghanistan
• Ethnicity and sectarianism

From the outset, the value-addition of the project's policy research has been that it is inter-disciplinary. It is not, and was never intended to be, a security project alone. From this perspective, no one single dimension or SoT prevails. Indeed, it is the multi-dimensional interplay between regional geopolitics and local realities which enhances the understanding of the challenges faced by the two countries, the region, and further afield. From this enhanced understanding, it is hoped that positive ways forward can be identified, as will be discussed in the Conclusion section, and in the preambles to the various chapters of the monograph. Dialogue, voice, seeking out the positive, and building on it, are part of this process.

The evolving interests of China towards security and not purely its economic interests, in a key position to play a strong role in the peace and state-building process in Afghanistan, due to its longstanding friendship with Pakistan. The latter's common need for energy – something shared with India - has also the potential for either positive engagement between the two countries,

or more negative outcomes, depending on how these and other broader geopolitical factors play out. Iran´s economic cooperation with Pakistan is increasing, and its proxy war with Saudi Arabia has so far – remarkably in some ways – specifically avoided fanning the flames of sectarian Sunni-Shi´a violence in Pakistan. To date, notwithstanding its longstanding, deep-rooted alliance with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan has consistently steered clear of being too closely associated with the Saudi-led alliance of Sunni states collaborating against Houthi rebels in Yemen, and then against the Syrian regime. Russia´s concerns over Da´esh and the apparent allegiance to it sworn by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) have reportedly even led it to consider financing the Afghan Taliban (denied by all concerned parties however). In Pakistan, a previously somewhat adversarial relationship has evolved into military cooperation, investment opportunities and engagement in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

At the close of the project in 2016, four main sets of interlinked issues stand out:

(i)   The Taliban movements in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the added overlay of the reported presence of Da´esh (Islamic State) in both countries, with a reported presence in Afghanistan in 25 out of the 34 provinces;[1]
(ii)  The outflow of refugees from Afghanistan (the second-largest in number after Syria) in some instances transiting through Pakistan and Iran, and the effects of the resultant "brain drain" on the human capital of Afghanistan, its neighbours, and the wider world
(iii) Governance issues in both countries, at the macro and the micro levels
(iv)  The cross-cutting issues of the regional economy, both for the good – regional economic integration; and for the bad – the drug economy that flows across both countries and on into their adjoining neighbours and beyond.

In particular, the effects of a lack of good governance or in some areas, or indeed of any writ of the state at all, resonate strongly. Inadequate governance has multiple bad effects, including facilitating the sort of chaos that violent extremists and those profiting from the black economy adeptly exploit. The renewed push by the Taliban in Afghanistan, the appearance of the Pakistani Taliban and the appearance of Da´esh´s are outcomes, not causes, of lack of governance. Militancy and corruption thrive on a governance vacuum, supported by a growing radicalisation of society and in particular, its youth, though not necessarily a violent radicalisatin. The domestic and regional economies cannot thrive until this vacuum is addressed. As long as physical insecurity, conflict and lack of economic opportunity prevail, the disillusioned and the desperate will continue to seek refuge elsewhere. The impact on Europe of the 2015 refugee outflow, including from Afghanistan, though primarily from the wars in Syria and to a lesser extent, Iraq, need no further discussion here.

This edited compilation therefore focuses on thirteen selected papers from the sixty three STAP RP products (2012-16), which best "tell the story" of these key themes as identified during the five years of the project. The 2016 perspective on the selected themes is reflected in the preambles by eminent analysts and the afterwords from the authors themselves, as an "epitaph" at the close of the project.

DR. EMMA HOOPER

Importantly, all the STAP RP papers, including this volume, constitute a deliberate match between the scope of the topic at hand and the players analysing it, using an interdisciplinary approach demonstrated by the range of eminent analysts, members of the project´s network of experts, from different countries, different fields and areas of expertise, who have collaborated with it. Extensive efforts were consistently made to identify and work with the best analysts from and on the region, and the project has benefitted immensely from their inputs, as well as from the annual discussions with the project´s network of experts, which helped shape the focus of the project (LINK TO EVENTS). The project website lists all those who participated in the project (LINK TO EXPERTS LISTS), who are too numerous to list here. But without all of them, we could not have done it.

Most importantly, we thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, whose support and belief in the project has made this project possible over the past five years.  We also thank the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF), who not only provided the initial seed funding, but who generously gave their intellectual support and collaboration, throughout the project life.

Finally, while many experts contributed to the findings presented, the final responsibility for the content is that of CIDOB alone.

# CHAPTER ONE:
# MAPPING THE SOURCES OF TENSION WITH REGIONAL DIMENSIONS

- SOURCES OF TENSION IN AFGHANISTAN & PAKISTAN: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

  *Zahid Hussain*

- MAPPING THE SOURCES OF TENSION AND THE INTERESTS OF REGIONAL POWERS IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

  *Emma Hooper & Juan Garrigues*

# SOURCES OF TENSION IN AFGHANISTAN & PAKISTAN: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

## Zahid Hussain

*Journalist and writer*

As the war in Afghanistan enters its eleventh year, there is no clear end in sight.

What started as a military intervention to punish the Taliban regime for hosting Al-Qaeda, which was responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attacks, has escalated into a wider regional conflict, with Afghanistan now at the centre of a new "Great Game". Pakistan, India, and Iran are vying for influence in the strife-torn country, as the West struggles to broker an endgame to the war in Afghanistan.

It is quite evident that the coalition forces are not on course for defeating the Taliban militarily, even with 150,000 troops installed in the country. Despite spending billions of dollars a year on military operations alone and ever-increasing allied casualties, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) forces have failed to prevent Taliban insurgents from controlling a large swath of Pashtun dominated eastern and southern Afghanistan.

The United States (US) and its allies have endorsed a plan for the Afghan government to take charge of security in the country by 2014. This optimism is premised on the assumption that the Afghan security forces would be ready to take over by that time, and that regional support will prop up Afghan stability. But the increasingly perilous situation on the ground gives little hope of achieving that objective. The expectation that a weak administration in Kabul will be able to transform Afghanistan into a stable state by 2014 and take over border and internal security responsibility is unrealistic at best.

Recent offensives by the Taliban and a series of audacious attacks targeting American and NATO installations in Kabul indicate the insurgents are much more powerful and more organised than at any time since the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The new U.S. counterinsurgency strategy has shown little sign of success despite the 2010 surge in troops. There is now a growing realisation among all parties that the war may not end in defeat for either side, but in some sort of political settlement with the insurgents, which would require direct talks with the Taliban.

*Zahid Hussain is the author of Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam (2007) and The Scorpion's Tail: The Relentless Rise of Islamic Militants in Pakistan (2010). He is currently a scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington DC.*

There is also a serious concern that withdrawal of foreign forces without any negotiated political mechanism in place, would not only plunge Afghanistan into a fierce contest over territory and population by various tribal groups and factions, but also draw the surrounding regional countries deeper into the conflict. A major challenge for the alliance therefore is how to wind down the war, reducing violence, while also preventing a wider regional conflict. Ending the war simply will not be possible without a power-sharing agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban, followed by an accord that includes the support of regional players with a legitimate stake in Afghanistan's future.

## The Role of Regional Interests

Without a sustainable agreement among surrounding countries guaranteeing Afghanistan's security and its neutrality, the country may turn into the centre of a bloody proxy war, with different actors each supporting rival factions across ethnic and sectarian lines. Such an agreement is also critical to prevent Afghanistan from reverting to a hub of global *jihad*. A land-locked country, Afghanistan shares borders with six countries, all of whom have a history of involvement in the country. Particularly Pakistan, with 1,500-mile long borders with Afghanistan and the war spilling over into its territory, has had much deeper links there and remains key to the resolution of the Afghan crisis. But other surrounding nations like Iran, China, Central Asia, Russia and India are also important to achieving a sustainable peace in the region. These countries may have varying interests and regard the actions of others suspiciously, but they each have a huge stake in Afghanistan's stability.

The overarching lessons of the regenerating insurgency and the subsequent failure of the allied forces to contain the ever-spreading militancy are absolutely clear: a negotiated political settlement intertwined with a regional approach is the only endgame. To be sure, a political settlement will be extremely difficult to achieve. There is even a question as to whether the Taliban are even prepared at this point to talk without an agreement on some sort of ceasefire.

Whilst some connections with Taliban groups have been established through different channels, there has not yet been any significant progress in the negotiations. Secret meetings were held in early 2011 in Germany and Qatar between a former private secretary of Mullah Omar and senior US officials. Facilitated by the German government, the preliminary talks collapsed after the identity of the Taliban interlocutor was leaked to the press. Similar contacts with the insurgents by the United Nations (UN) also failed to make any headway. Similarly, President Karzai's initiative to reach out to the Taliban experienced a serious setback after the assassination of the government's chief negotiator Burhanuddin Rabbani, and suffered further with the downturn in Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan.

### A Plan Without a Strategy

The underlying problem is therefore that the Western allies may have an exit plan, but there is no coherent strategy in place that could

lead to an orderly transition in Afghanistan. As a result the much touted reconciliation process has yet to take off the ground. For negotiation to turn into a viable exit strategy, concrete steps need to be taken that include calling for a ceasefire, establishing a timeline for withdrawal of most foreign troops and creating a transitional political mechanism. These steps are the only way to move towards a solution to the Afghan conundrum.

The complexities of an exit plan have been further compounded by the competing interests among the surrounding countries and divergent strategic priorities of the United States. There may be a consensus among the surrounding nations and regional players to help the NATO forces leave Afghanistan, but there is a huge division over the mechanism to use. Most of the neighbouring countries, especially Pakistan, Iran and China, are wary of the US plan to maintain permanent military bases in Afghanistan beyond 2014.

Iran shares a 560-mile border with western Afghanistan and has historical business and cultural ties with the people there. Tehran maintains cordial relations with the Karzai government, but longstanding hostility between Iran and the United States remains a major problem in the way of a regional accord. More important for Iran, however, is that stability in Afghanistan would make it easier for foreign forces to leave Afghanistan. Iran's concern about narcotics traffic from Afghanistan and its plans to expand trade to Central Asia are also a reason for Tehran to cooperate with the West in the efforts to bring an end to the war in Afghanistan. But there is also Western apprehension about Iranian motives and its deep involvement in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

Of all the neighbouring countries, China may currently have the least direct influence on Afghanistan, but its growing economic interests in the country make it an important stakeholder in regional security. With a 3.5 billion-dollar investment in copper mining, China is the largest single foreign direct investor in Afghanistan. It is also involved in an ambitious infrastructure development plan that includes construction of a power plant and a freight railway in the country. Beijing supports the Karzai government, but it would not endorse permanent foreign military bases in its neighbourhood.

Whilst the Central Asian states may not have the power to influence development in Afghanistan, their mutual historical linkages and ethnic and cultural proximity make them important regional players. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are also important routes for supplies to the NATO forces in Afghanistan. As compared to Pakistan and Iran, however, the Central Asian nations remain – at this point - peripheral, but their security is also threatened by the instability in Afghanistan.

However, the issues most seriously affecting the Afghan endgame are: (i) those of militant sanctuaries in Pakistani tribal areas; (ii) a stubborn rivalry between India and Pakistan; and (iii) the continuing stalemate between Kabul and Islamabad. These are the fault lines that are the major source of tension and which need to be addressed for a sustainable peace in the region.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

## (i) Pakistan's Conundrum

Pakistan's role is perhaps the most critical in determining the course of the Afghan endgame. While its cooperation is key to the winding down of the war, its geographical proximity and ethnic and political linkages across the border also enable Pakistan to play a spoiler's role.

Ironies abound in the alliance between the West and Pakistan that has emerged since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. While being a critical ally in the war on terror, Pakistan has also been described as an epicentre of Islamic militancy and *jihadi* terrorism causing serious threat to regional and global security. Pakistan serves as the major logistical line for NATO forces in Afghanistan (more than 75 percent of the supplies to the coalition forces go through Pakistan), but its lawless tribal regions provide safe havens for the Taliban insurgency and its logistical supply lines. That has placed Pakistan in the unique situation of having strong leverage over both sides of the war, despite this dichotomy having also been a major cause of conflict between the US-led coalition forces and Islamabad.

Mired in this mutual mistrust, the two sides have substantial differences of opinion about the appropriate strategy in Afghanistan and how to deal with the wider insurgency. Pakistan is reluctant to support any solution that does not protect its interest in Afghanistan or that provides for a nonaligned setup in Kabul with a dominant role for Pashtuns, pitching it at odds with the Western allies and the Afghan government. Meanwhile, Pakistan's ambivalence about cracking down on the militants in the tribal territories is seen as one of the reasons for the reversal in the war in Afghanistan.

Since the start of the war in Afghanistan, the remote tribal areas on Pakistan's border have become home to a lethal brew of Al-Qaeda operatives, both Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, and *jihadists* from across the globe. These tribal areas are known as the seven autonomous federally administered tribal areas, or FATA. Several outlawed Pakistani militant groups now operate from these territories, and the remote mountainous regions have become the main bases for the training of insurgents fighting on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghan border.

North Waziristan, one of Pakistan's seven semi-autonomous tribal regions along the border of Afghanistan, has been a major hub for the aforementioned Al-Qaeda-linked insurgents. The largest group of fighters is associated with the *Haqqani* network, led by legendary former Afghan *Mujahideen* commander, Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Sirajuddin. Their strong connections with Al-Qaeda have made the network the most dangerous insurgent faction in Afghanistan.

For Pakistan, the network remains a useful hedge against an uncertain outcome in Afghanistan. The deep reluctance to take action against the *Haqqani* network is a reflection of Pakistan's worries about the events that will transpire after the eventual pull out of foreign forces from Afghanistan. The Pakistani military establishment is convinced that a renewed civil war will break out, if NATO forces leave Afghanistan without a negotiated political settlement. Under that scenario, the Pashtun-dominated Afghan Taliban and *Haqqani* network could be used

again by Pakistan as a proxy force for exercising control over Afghan government and countering Indian influence in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's southwestern province of Balochistan is another safe haven of Taliban insurgents.

It is widely believed that most of the Taliban leadership known as the Quetta *Shura,* including the spiritual leader of the movement Mullah Mohammed Omar, have their command and control system in Quetta, the provincial capital. Scores of Afghan refugee camps were set up in Balochistan almost three decades ago, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and they have become centres of recruitment for the Taliban. Afghans now constitute almost 30 percent of Quetta's population of 1.7 million. The issue of the insurgent safe havens in Pakistan has become increasingly volatile with the escalation in militant violence in Afghanistan, causing serious concern to the NATO forces.

Pakistan, however, does not have as much leverage over the Quetta *Shura* as over the *Haqqani* network. Mullah Omar has independently approved contacts with the Karzai government and his representative has also been engaged in secret negotiations. The arrest in 2010 of Mullah Baradar, a senior Taliban commander, underscores the growing strains between the Pakistani military establishment and the Quetta *Shura*. It is also the reason why Pakistan has been aggressively pushing for the inclusion of the *Haqqani* network in the negotiations. But it is highly unlikely that *Haqqanis* who owe their allegiance to Mullah Omar would go their separate way.

### The Implications of Continued Instability

The implications for Pakistan of continued instability in Afghanistan, however, could be drastic.

The decade-long war in Afghanistan has had devastating effects on Pakistan, turning the country into a new battleground for Al-Qaeda linked militants. Thousands of Pakistani civilians and military personnel have been killed in the wave of terrorist attacks and in the fighting against the insurgents in the country's northwestern areas. The economic and political cost of the war has also been huge, threatening to completely destabilise the country with catastrophic consequences for global security.

Having returned to democracy less than four years ago, Pakistan faces the additional, daunting prospect of a creeping military coup. The powerful military has already taken charge of the country's national security and foreign policy, a development that certainly does not bode well for the preservation of a nascent democratic process.

A weak government and its civilian leaders have proven unable to deal with the grave political, economic and security challenges. The country, with more than 100 nuclear weapons and an army half a million strong, has descended into near-chaos. The worsening economic situation has fuelled growing discontent among the population, providing an even more conducive environment for the continuing rise of militancy and religious extremism. Pakistan is sitting on a powder keg and the fragmentation of the country has become a real possibility.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

**A Pashtun War?**

A major fault in the approach to the war has been the failure to understand the extent to which this is not only an Afghan war, or only a war against Islamic extremists, but also a Pashtun war. It is ethnic Pashtuns on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border who have taken the lead in the insurgency. And now a distinctive Pakistani Taliban movement known as *Tehrik-e-*Taliban *Pakistan* (TTP) has evolved, seeking to enforce a draconian Islamic rule not only in the tribal areas, but also in the neighbouring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the North West Frontier) Province.

Both the Afghan and the Pakistani Taliban movements are predominantly Pashtun movements. A major force behind recruitment has been the belief that the war in Afghanistan was directed against Pashtuns, a view that was reinforced by the installation of the Northern Alliance, predominantly comprising minority Tajik, Uzbeks and Hazara, into power in Kabul in 2001. This move both intensified long-standing ethnic animosities and alienated the predominantly Pashtun southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan, which are now the stronghold of the insurgency.

No effort has been made by the US-led allied forces to alleviate the Pashtun grievances in Afghanistan. Instead they were treated as the enemy. These are the same Pashtun tribesmen who fought the Soviet Army two decades ago, and they will not give up this fight any more readily now, than they did then.

As the recent insurgency in Pakistan has escalated, it has grown in both numbers and sophistication. The Pashtun insurgents in the tribal areas have been joined by several other Pakistani militant groups and have formed an increasingly interconnected and coordinated web, with close collaboration with Al-Qaeda.

**Children of Opportunity & Deprivation**

Furthermore, there is a new generation of Al-Qaeda in Pakistan, which comprises primarily Pakistanis (rather than the previous mainly foreign fighters). This includes a flood of new recruits from the well-educated urban middle class, youth, professionals, doctors, engineers and retired military officers, who have brought an increasing sophistication to militant operations on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan borders. Children of opportunity rather than deprivation, they have been the masterminds behind many of the terrorist attacks in the country. This new generation of militants, products of elite secular educational institutions rather than religious schools or *madrassas*, is strongly committed to the cause of global *jihad* and has acted as a magnet for radicalised Muslims across the world.

Then there are others, children of deprivation from the poverty stricken rural areas, lured into *jihad* in the name of religion. Poverty makes them ripe targets for recruitment. Many of them are picked up from radical *madrassas* and easily brainwashed to sacrifice their lives fighting against "enemies of Islam". Some of them, as young as 12 years old, end up becoming suicide bombers.

The militants have now infiltrated new terrain, far from the mountainous territories.  They have turned the country's largest province, Punjab, into their new battleground, launching a series of bloody suicide bombings and sophisticated attacks on the urban centers of Lahore, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi, the army headquarters.  Infiltrating deep into the major cities, the groups have divided into small terrorist cells, making them more difficult to track down.

A dangerous nexus has emerged among Punjab-based, outlawed, Pakistani militant groups like the *Jaish-e-Mohammed, Tehrik-e-*Taliban *Pakistan*, which operate from the tribal region, and from Al-Qaeda, presenting a serious challenge to the security agencies.  Emboldened by the government's ambivalent efforts to counter the militant threat, Islamic radicals have stepped up their propaganda war, widely distributing video cassettes of Taliban killings and speeches of their leaders.  *Jihadi* literature is distributed freely, despite the government's ban.

### "Good" & "Bad" Militants

A major failure on the part of Pakistan has been not  to recognise the severity of the threat posed by the homegrown militant groups.  Despite the rise in extremist violence in the country the government and the military refuse to crack down on the militant groups, who continue to operate with impunity.  Organisations like *Lashkar-e-Taiba*, which was responsible for the 2008 terrorist attacks on the Indian city of Mumbai, are still being patronised by the Pakistani military and intelligence services.  The policy of making a distinction between "good militants" and "bad militants" has been a major factor contributing to the rising violent extremism in Pakistan.  This policy of appeasement towards religious extremism threatens to push Pakistan to a civil war.

Additionally, there has been a failure to understand that combating the militant threat requires something far more than a military campaign.  It requires a comprehensive counter terrorism strategy as well as strong political leadership.  Both have been sorely lacking.

Consequently, whether or not even the combined ground operations by Pakistani troops and the U.S. drone campaign can ultimately dislodge the insurgents from their strongholds in the remote regions and urban centers and defeat them is very much an open question.

The U.S. strategy for fighting the insurgencies in both Afghanistan and Pakistan is premised on rooting out the militants from territory after territory, steadily taking decisive control, and assassinating their leadership to weaken the groups' operations.  But the decapitation policy has thus far failed to make significant headway in either rooting out the insurgency, or stopping the attacks.

In Pakistan, even the major military offensives have resulted in only questionable gains, while stoking the fire of new recruitment to the groups and driving them into new strongholds in more formidable tribal territory—the most remote of the border regions, North Waziristan—and into the country's heartland.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

25

A key flaw in Pakistan's strategy in the fight against the insurgency is that it has failed to account for the ability of the groups to regenerate. The government has failed to put in place an effective administration and policing system after successful military operations driving out the militants from Swat valley and some other parts of north western Pakistan, leaving the people under perpetual threat of the insurgents coming back.

Their fear is justified. The militants have shown themselves capable of regrouping and striking back. The killing of their senior leaders has little effect on their operations. The Pakistani military has now deployed 100,000 troops in the effort to root out the militants. Yet, despite the increased deployment, militant attacks have resumed in some of the areas that were thought to be cleared. The threat represented by the insurgency has grown so severe that the stability of the Pakistani state is now seriously in question.

### Fuelling Insurgency?

The U.S drone strikes in the tribal region have been another factor in fuelling insurgency in Pakistan. The most aggressive operation that the CIA has been involved in to date has killed several senior Al-Qaeda operatives and thrown the terrorist network into disarray. But the success of the campaign, and the larger success and wisdom of the current US Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy remain questionable.

For the first time in history an intelligence agency of one country has been using predators to target individuals for killing in another country with which it is not officially at war. No mention has ever been made publicly by either U.S. or Pakistani authorities of the drone strikes themselves or the collateral damage and its political cost. As the strikes have caused an increasing number of civilian deaths, including those of many women and children, public anger has surged. The strikes have also spurred a significant rise in the number of recruits joining the militant groups, in part because according to tribal code, the families of the drones' victims are required to seek revenge.

The United States needs to re-evaluate its policy of using drones as a major tool to fight militants in Pakistan's tribal region, as it has fuelled rather than suppressed the insurgency. The political cost of the drone strikes far exceeds the tactical gains. There are also legal and ethical questions involved in the killing of people just on suspicion of being terrorists.

## (iii) India-Pakistan Rivalry: The Battle for Influence

What is widely perceived as a rapidly diminishing commitment by the West to the Afghan war has also intensified Pakistan's long-standing struggle with India for supremacy of influence in Afghanistan. The resolution of the Afghan war is becoming deeply entangled in the prolonged rivalry between Islamabad and New Delhi. The Pakistani military establishment views the expanding Indian presence in its "backyard" as a serious threat to their country's own security.

Historically, India has shared close cultural and political ties with Afghanistan and maintained cordial relations with successive governments in Kabul until the emergence of Taliban rule in 1996. Like most countries, India never recognised the Islamic emirates and had actively backed anti-Taliban resistance, and the Northern Alliance comprising Tajik, Uzbek and other non-Pashtun ethnic groups.

The US-led military action following the 9/11 terrorist attacks led to the India-Afghanistan alliance, which opened up massive opportunity for India to rebuild its influence in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Indian cultural influence in Afghanistan is very deep-rooted and has become its greatest asset in boosting its "soft" power.

Since 2001, India has moved aggressively - and successfully - to expand its political and economic influence in Afghanistan. It has ploughed close to US $ 2 billion in economic and military assistance to the Karzai government, making it the largest regional donor to the country. The trade between the two countries has also increased many folds over since 2001.

Indian companies are now involved in building highways and other important infrastructure projects along the border, and have implemented some 50 development projects, including a highway to Iran and transmission line to Uzbekistan. There are currently 4,000 to 5,000 Indian workers and security personnel working on scores of high profile development projects across Afghanistan. For India, Afghanistan is also a potential route to access Central Asian markets and to meet its increasing energy demand.

Afghanistan's strategic partnership agreement with India in October 2011, involving New Delhi in the training of Afghan security forces, has reinforced Pakistan's apprehension. It is the first time Kabul has signed such a pact with another country.

India's involvement in Afghanistan is, however, extremely sensitive because of its delicate - and often deadly - power game in South Asia. India's interest in Afghanistan is not just to help rebuild the war-torn country, but also to counter Pakistan's ambition to gain influence there. Islamabad's anxiety over the expanding influence of its arch foe over the country's western borders therefore does not come as a surprise.

Since their inception as separate, independent countries six decades ago, the two South Asian rivals have fought directly or indirectly for influence in Kabul. Pakistan actively supported Afghan *Mujahideen* resistance against the Soviet occupation and then supported the Taliban in the quest for a strategic depth in Afghanistan that might be helpful in the event of a war with India. Pakistan's policy has therefore been to help establish a friendly Pashtun Islamic regime in Afghanistan that would keep India away.

Unsurprisingly, the expanding Indian presence in Afghanistan is seen by the Pakistani security establishment as a strategic defeat and has compounded Islamabad's fears of being encircled. A major worry for Pakistan, therefore, is how to defend both its eastern and western borders as India and Afghanistan become increasingly close.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

Some of Pakistan's security concerns are legitimate, but the fears of encirclement verge on paranoia. This has resulted in Pakistan's continuing patronage of some Afghan Taliban factions, such as the *Haqqani* network, which it considers a vital tool for countering Indian influence, even at the risk of Islamabad's strategic relationship with Washington.

For a long time, Pakistan has accused India of using its consulate offices in Afghanistan's border cities for espionage and of stirring up separatist insurgency in the western province of Balochistan. The Baloch, who are second largest ethnic group living on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, have carried out at least five major insurgencies since the creation of Pakistan in 1947 in pursuit of their demand for autonomy. They were all brutally suppressed by the Pakistani military. The latest uprising erupted in 2005 after Pakistani military forces killed Nawab Akber Khan Bugti, one of the most powerful tribal chieftains. Many of the Baloch insurgency leaders operate from sanctuaries in Afghanistan, causing tension between Islamabad and Kabul.

This struggle for influence took a more vicious turn in 2008 when the *Haqqani* network carried out a car bomb attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul, allegedly on the instruction of the Pakistani intelligence agency, the ISI, killing more than 50 people. The incident gave a new and more violent turn to the ongoing proxy war between the two countries. Indian nationals, working on various development projects, have also been attacked by the Taliban insurgents.

India has a vital interest in Afghanistan for the same reasons as the rest of the international community: to prevent it from reverting to a safe haven for terrorists. Under the former Taliban rule, Afghanistan had become a training ground for militants who fought against Indian forces in the disputed Himalayan state of Kashmir. India favours a regional agreement that would not only protect its interests, but also prevent the unraveling of Afghanistan after the withdrawal of US-led coalition forces.

For a sustainable resolution of the Afghan crisis, it is thus imperative to address Pakistan's legitimate security concerns. But asking for India to leave Afghanistan or to exclude it from a regional agreement may not be acceptable to either the US or Afghanistan: India is important for the United States, because it shares the US antipathy towards the return of Taliban government in Afghanistan.

**Who Holds the Key to Stability in Afghanistan – Islamabad or Delhi?**

Pakistan views the current US approach as a tilt towards India and therefore sees no strategic advantage in eliminating Taliban safe havens on its territory, or in acting in full cooperation with the coalition forces. The devastating attacks launched by Pakistan-based groups, like the *Haqqani* network, are aimed at sending a clear message that Islamabad, not Delhi, holds the key to stability in Afghanistan.

To be sure, Pakistan would not be fully committed to fighting Afghan insurgents until its own insecurities towards India are addressed.

It is also important that the international community, particularly the United States, help resolve the outstanding disputes that remain the main cause of conflict between India and Pakistan.

There is a need to reassure Islamabad that India would not figure in its bilateral relations with Kabul. Pakistan and India should also be encouraged to evolve a bilateral mechanism to discuss and resolve their differences over the Afghan issue. Continued struggle for influence between them would only make it more difficult to establish peace in Afghanistan, with serious long-term consequences for the entire region.

## (iii) Pakistan-Afghanistan: Antagonism & Stalemate

Another fault line undermining the prospect of sustainable peace in the region is the increasingly antagonistic relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The escalating tension on the Pakistani-Afghan borders is a serious cause of concern, as the 2014 deadline for the withdrawal of NATO forces approaches. Cross-border raids and the recent assassinations of a number of senior Afghan officials including former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani - allegedly by Pakistan-based Taliban insurgents - have pushed back the efforts to normalise the relations between Kabul and Islamabad, which had gained some momentum under the elected government in Pakistan. Meanwhile, the attacks on Pakistani security forces by the militants taking shelter across the border in Afghanistan have also heightened the tension between the two countries.

Of all the countries in the region, only Pakistan has had a major and contentious territorial dispute with Afghanistan. The two neighbouring Muslim countries have never had friendly ties, except for a brief period when the Taliban ruled Afghanistan. But the relations have hit a new low with the war in Afghanistan getting bloodier. There is a long history of both Afghanistan and Pakistan providing sanctuaries to the other's insurgents, which has fuelled hostility between the two neighbours.

While some elements of friction between Kabul and Islamabad are rooted in the policy pursued during the British colonial period, the four decades of wars and civil strife in Afghanistan as well as regional rivalries have further complicated the relationship.

Mostly though, it is the longstanding border dispute, which has been the major cause of tension between the two nations. Afghanistan has never recognised the Durand line as an international border and instead lays claim on Pakistan's Pashtun areas.

### The Durand Line

The Durand line was drawn in 1893 as a frontier between British India and Afghanistan. It also brought a swath of tribal land (now part of Pakistan) under British control. The demarcation also effectively divided the Pashtun population in half, thus sowing the seeds for a permanent conflict. Some 35 million Pashtuns live in Pakistan, representing 15 to

20 percent of the country's population, whilst in Afghanistan they are the largest ethnic group, comprising almost half of the country's 30 million population.

The Pakistani side of the Durand Line includes the provinces of Balochistan, North West Frontier Province (now renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and FATA. The Afghan side of the border extends from Nuristan province in the northeast to Nimroz province in the southwest.

People on both sides of the border consider the Durand line as a "soft border", across which it is their right to move freely. This has also been the reason for Pakistan being drawn into Afghan conflicts.

Even the Pakistan-friendly Taliban regime refused to recognise the Durand Line as an international boundary. Afghan President Karzai once called the Durand Line "a line of hatred which raised a wall between the two brothers."

The Durand line may not be a hot issue at the moment, but it continues to flare up whenever Pakistan suggests fencing or mining it to stop cross border insurgent movement. The opposition comes not only from the Afghan government, but also from tribesmen on the Pakistani side.

## The Tribal Cauldron

The security challenges of the Pakistani tribal areas lie at the heart of a wider threat to regional and global stability. Pakistan's battle for control over the lawless region has assumed much greater importance with the approach of the Afghan endgame.

Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal regions have for a long time remained major centres of cross border tension, as they share a 600-kilometre frontier with Afghanistan. The ungovernable borderland separates Pakistan and Afghanistan and the ethnic Pashtuns on both sides, who have long despised and ignored the dividing Durand line. With a population of more than four million comprised mostly of Pashtun tribes, the area straddling the Durand line has become a major battleground for Al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups since the US invasion of Afghanistan.

The Federally Administered Trial Area (FATA) is divided into seven agencies or administrative units with a total area of 2,700 kilometres, which include Bajaur, Momand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram and North and South Waziristan. The territories closely resemble a colony with the tribesmen deprived of even basic civil and political rights. Normal Pakistani laws do not apply there and all powers rest with a centrally-appointed Political Agent, who wields extraordinary authority over his subjects. He could jail any tribesman without trial and could impose collective punishments on the entire tribe.

This oppressive system of administration has largely been the cause for the social and economic backwardness and lawlessness of the region. Less than 30 percent of the tribesmen attend school, while 90 percent drop out before completing their education. With little economic activity, most people live on smuggling, gunrunning or drug trafficking.

The resulting pervasive poverty has also been a factor for the tribesmen joining Al-Qaeda and other militant groups.

It is not only ideological bonds and sympathy that helped Al-Qaeda buy the support of the tribesmen, but also money – the people are poor and easily lured by it. In an area where there is no other employment, the influx of Al-Qaeda money was just one more way by which tribesmen gained influence.

Since 2004 Pakistan has carried out several military operations in the territories and most of them ended in failure. The tribesmen considered the military action to be an attack on their autonomy and an attempt to subjugate them. The military offensive against Al-Qaeda militants turned into an undeclared war between the Pakistani military and the rebel tribesmen.

A major challenge for the Pakistani government and the military is to enforce their control over the lawless territories. But military action alone does not offer a long-term solution to the complex problem. Pakistan needs to take urgent measures to end the alienation and backwardness of the tribal region as well. The ongoing military operation provides an opportunity to push for the long-delayed integration of the region with rest of the country, ending its ambiguous semi- autonomous status.

**Could Trade Be The Answer?**

The prevailing century-old oppressive administrative system has outlived its utility and there is a need to bring FATA into Pakistan's mainstream. This involves doing away with the present federally-controlled administrative system and extending Pakistan's legal framework to the territories. It also requires Islamabad both to foster a sense of political rights and responsibility within the region and to make massive investments there in human and infrastructural development. For example, the development of road networks would help end the economic isolation of the territories and connect them with other parts of Pakistan as well as with Afghanistan. This would not only boost trade between the two countries, but also bring prosperity to the region.

Pakistan's bilateral trade with Afghanistan now surpasses 2 billion dollars a year (with Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan spiraling up to 1.2 billion dollars). The development of highways connecting the two countries could increase economic and trade opportunities for them as well.

Afghanistan is dependent on Pakistan for trade. The Afghan Transit Trade Agreement allows Afghanistan to import goods free of duty through the Pakistani port of Karachi, which is key to Afghanistan's economy. Pakistan is also the largest exporter to Afghanistan.

The end of militancy in the FATA would also help stabilise Afghanistan and create an economic boom for Pakistani exports of goods and services there. It would also help materialise long-pending plans to develop an export processing zone along the Pakistan-Afghan borders.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

A stable and peaceful Afghanistan could also materialise the long-term vision of building a pipeline that would transport Central Asian energy to markets in South Asia. The Afghan peace dividend is a vital marker for the entire region.

## Conclusions: The Way Forward

For Afghan peace efforts to succeed, it is imperative to bridge the widening trust gap among Pakistan, Afghanistan and the United States. The cooperation among them is critical to the efforts to stabilise Afghanistan.

The hostility between Iran and the United States, and Iran's reservations about peace talks with the Pakistan-supported Taliban are other complicated fault lines acting as "spoilers" for regional stability. A major challenge for the Western alliance is therefore how to bring Tehran on board as tension between Washington and Tehran intensifies. Tehran is reluctant to support any political solution which gives a predominant role to the Taliban.

Similarly, the opposition from both China and Russia to the continued presence of US troops in Afghanistan beyond 2014 is another issue obstructing regional cooperation on the Afghan end game and needs to be resolved.

Measures are also needed to prevent Afghanistan becoming the centre of a new proxy war between India and Pakistan. For resolution of their competing security interests, the two South Asian countries need to engage seriously on a bilateral basis. The US and other Western powers should also play their role in conflict resolution. Improvement in Pakistan-India relations would have the most positive influence on the Afghan peace efforts.

Pakistan's legitimate security concerns have to be addressed for an orderly transition in Afghanistan. But Islamabad also has to dispel the impression that it is pushing for installation of a "Pakistan-friendly" government in Kabul. Such an ambition could be disastrous for regional stability.

Some of Islamabad's concerns about Pashtun revolt spreading to its borders may be valid, but it does not in any way justify it acting as a spokesman for the Pashtun population in Afghanistan, or for that matter the Afghan Taliban.

Pakistan has a critical role in helping reconciliation in Afghanistan, but it cannot and should not be expected to talk on behalf of any insurgent group. Pakistan can play the role of facilitator for talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government, but it would be a grave mistake on its part to become a party to the ethnic divide in Afghanistan.

It is also important that Kabul must not reopen the issue of the Durand Line and should respect it as an international boundary. This border needs to be better controlled, so as not to allow either side to be used as a sanctuary for the other side's insurgents. The settlement of the border issue could remove a major source of conflict between Afghanistan and

Pakistan and help build the trust that is essential for the Afghan peace process and for regional stability.

Afghanistan must not get entangled in Pakistan's Baloch insurgency and allow its territory to be used for cross-border activities. The alleged cooperation between Afghan and Indian intelligence in support of Baloch separatists has contributed in fueling mistrust between Kabul and Islamabad.

Stability in Afghanistan is critical for peace in the region, but much more so for Pakistan which has been directly affected by the 10-year-long war spilling over to its territory. Pakistan must not allow Afghan insurgents to use its territory as a safe haven, or for cross-border attacks. The use of the Taliban by Islamabad to turn the situation in Afghanistan in its favour would not only keep the region in turmoil, but in turn would hurt Pakistan the most, as its military is engaged in a bloody war against its own militants.

The rise of militancy and violent extremism in Pakistan is a serious threat - not only to the country's own internal security - but also to regional stability. The policy of appeasement and ambivalence in cracking down on some extremist groups has turned the country into a training ground for Islamic radicals from across the world. The spread of extremist violence also carries huge consequences for the country's economic stability.

Pakistani civil and military leadership needs to formulate an overarching strategy to combat rising militancy, which is critical for the country's economic and social progress, as well as international security.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan would open vast economic and trade opportunities for the entire region and beyond. A stable Afghanistan could resume its central role of a land bridge connecting South Asia, the Middle East, Far East and Central Asia, bringing immense economic and trade benefits to the region. The revival of the old Silk Road trading route would help the fast transit of goods and also bring economic prosperity to Afghanistan. It could also make possible electricity transmission and natural gas supply from Central Asia to India and Pakistan.

Similarly, the construction of railroads and highways linking South Asia, Iran, China and Central Asia could contribute immensely to the development of the region. It would also help to tap Afghanistan's huge mineral resources. Currently Afghanistan's economy is completely dependent on foreign aid, which constitutes 50 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). For the development of a sustainable economy, Afghanistan would need to develop its own resources and this could only be possible with regional cooperation. Three decades of wars and the consequent instability of Afghanistan has left its massive underground mineral resources untapped. But over the last few years the exploration of mineral wealth in Afghanistan has started attracting billions of dollars of foreign investments. That has created further incentive for regional cooperation towards peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Additionally, common objectives such as combating terrorism, narcotics and organised crime require closer regional cooperation. The rise of militancy and violent extremism threatens the entire region and hence there is a need for an effective regional mechanism to fight it.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

## Afterword

Peace and stability eludes Afghanistan as most of the coalition forces have left the strife torn country. 2015 was the bloodiest since the 2001 US invasion. The Taliban has extended the fighting to the northern provinces, which have never been their stronghold. Meanwhile, confusion and uncertainty surround the resumption of direct talks between the Kabul government and the insurgents.

Surely the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) made up of top officials from Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China, have been able to draw up some kind of a road map for peace negotiations. But that does not seem enough to get the process started. There is still a lot of ground to cover before one can expect the warring sides to engage in more serious and substantive negotiations on the future of the strife-torn country.

China's growing involvement in Afghan peace efforts has certainly been a very positive influence. One major contribution of the QCG is that it has helped in the improvement of bilateral relations between Islamabad and Kabul that had nosedived in 2015 after the second round of the Murree talks were cancelled following the news of the death of Mullah Omar. Certainly, relations between the two countries are critical for the peace initiative to work. Still, there are sources of tension and distrust that continue to cast a long shadow over the process.

 Although Pakistani and Afghan leaders have agreed to resume the reconciliation process in Afghanistan, it will not be easy to bring the suspended talks back on track. Buoyed by their advances in northern Afghanistan and consolidation of their area of influence in the south and the west, the Afghan Taliban seem to have hardened their position on the talks too.

**Zahid Hussain**
2016

# MAPPING THE SOURCES OF TENSION AND THE INTERESTS OF REGIONAL POWERS IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

**Dr. Emma Hooper**
*Project Director Sources of Tension in Afghanistan & Pakistan:
A Regional Perspective*

**Juan Garrigues**
*Senior Associated Research Fellow, CIDOB*

*This Mapping Document draws on ten expert papers commissioned under the CIDOB project "Sources of Tension in Afghanistan & Pakistan: A Regional Perspective" (STAP RP), together with the analytical outputs of project round table seminars and in-region research (September 2011-November 2012); and interviews with a wide range of stakeholders in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Europe over the same period. The document schematically summarizes policy research findings on the sources of tension with regional implications that affect Afghanistan and Pakistan; and identifies the interests of, and related "red lines" for, the five main implicated regional powers: India, Iran, Russia, China and Saudi Arabia.*

## Introduction

A crossroads appears to be approaching in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As Western powers rapidly disengage from a divided Afghanistan, Afghan political and security institutions will either successfully maintain stability, or the country will move into a new era of conflict and chaos. Under either of these scenarios, the robustness of the institutions created by the 2001 Bonn accord will be put to the test. Meanwhile, Pakistan is confronting a challenging social and political transformation of its own. Whether its civilian institutions can truly address the fundamental issues facing the country and its identity, and avoid a national crisis that could shake its core foundations, is still to be determined.

Indeed, the very sources of tension that have for many years defined the internal dynamics of both countries are once again in flux. While tensions surrounding governance, social and economic issues, the conflict in Afghanistan, ethnicity and sectarianism, radicalisation and militancy have defined the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and with the rest of the region throughout the last decade, the nature of these tensions is rapidly changing, as are the stances of actors who define them.

In both countries, state institutions have been strained in responding to these challenges. Furthermore, bilateral confrontations have characterised the public facade of their mutual relations. However, in parallel, the past years have also seen increasing political, commercial and people-to-people ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan. A growing realisation on the extent of the challenges at hand and their interconnected nature with the region's stability, has led to increased dialogue and interaction between a range of concerned actors and communities.

The withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan in the coming years, together with the crisis point that appears within reach in both countries, has none the less also led to increasing concerns at the national, regional and international levels. With the precedent of the Soviet troops' withdrawal in 1989 being followed by a civil war in 1992, and with much of the world presently facing a grave economic crisis, pessimism abounds as to the potential scenarios that might develop.

What is however often absent from most future scenarios which are identified from afar, are the perspectives of those closest and most affected by how things develop in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the neighbouring countries - and the most influential among them, the regional powers. In the geo-political context of Asia's rapidly-rising share of global trade and growing energy needs, regional powers are conscious that opportunities also abound in Afghanistan and Pakistan. With these regional powers likely to play an increased role in both countries following the withdrawal of Western forces, understanding their evolving interests and how they may play out, is more crucial than ever.

In Afghanistan, regional actors are positioning themselves to fill the vacuum which will be left behind by the US and its allies. The extent to which these regional powers will influence the future of Afghanistan - and how - is however still unclear. What is unquestionable, however, is that major interests are at stake: conflict in Afghanistan has an impact that

goes far beyond its borders and the country lies in a strategic position for the potential economic integration of the region.

Given the volatile phase being entered, and the changed context after a decade of a strong international presence in Afghanistan, regional powers have adopted hedging strategies, adjustable depending on the different scenarios being played out after most international troops withdraw in 2014 and beyond. How these strategies develop will be conditioned by factors ranging from how Afghanistan's weak institutions respond to urgent governance challenges, to what type and level of residual presence the US and NATO will leave behind.

In this context, Afghanistan's own primary interest is avoiding an escalation of conflict with the withdrawal of international forces. While different actors have diverging positions and objectives, an escalation of tension into a new civil war actually appears to be against the interests of most - if not all - of the relevant Afghan actors. Whilst these continue to compete domestically over power and influence, there is an obvious need for all national actors to work together towards common national interests.

But what, indeed, can be categorised as a common understanding on the nature of Afghan national interests? Common ground appears to exist on advancing economic ties with regional powers; and on regional economic integration. While opposing national actors have different strategies to reach the same end, all seem to share that same final objective. Other objectives – by no means always common - such as ending the insurgency through the democratic participation of all relevant Afghan actors (including the Taliban), are harder to achieve. For these, increased dialogue will be required in order to reach basic consensus. The international community, through the appointment of an international facilitator, perceived to be both neutral and of high standing, should assist Afghanistan to generate this common interest, whilst promoting an Afghan-owned, Afghan-driven process.

Meanwhile, Pakistan – the key external actor for Afghanistan, as well as a major regional actor – increasingly forms the focus of regional and international concerns. While there appear to be some encouraging changes taking place there, such as the strengthened role of the judiciary and the devolution of powers to the provinces, the destabilising potential of a nuclear power with a population of 185 million falling further into crisis presents a nightmare scenario.

At present, a wide array of domestic threats ranging from increasing militancy and radicalism to addressing urgent energy needs, challenge Pakistan's stability. Whilst some can be addressed in the coming two to three years, others will require a longer time frame of a decade or more. The extent to which the country's leaders recognise and confront these challenges and are able to achieve the requisite deep-seated political, economic and social transformation, will be central factors affecting both domestic and regional stability, and the prospects for regional economic integration.

Another key element that strongly conditions stability in Pakistan - and which is today in flux - is its relations with the United States. Externally, the US has overtaken India as Pakistan's prime foreign policy concern, which strongly impacts on the country's stance towards Afghanistan,

because Pakistan regards the US as one of the major causes of the problems in the neighbouring country and indeed within Pakistan itself. There is an overwhelming sentiment among a wide cross-section of Pakistani society, is that this partnership is both a net negative and a major impediment to peace within Pakistan's borders. Indeed, a fundamental reason for Pakistan's hedging strategies (which impact in turn across the region) is that it has never believed that the US will emerge victorious in Afghanistan. For Pakistan, therefore, unlike other regional actors, hedging results from certainty (that the US will not win), not uncertainty (on the final outcome of the war in Afghanistan). Furthermore, this belief that the US cannot win, may well make its defeat in Afghanistan a self-fulfilling prophecy.

in addition to managing its relations with the US, Pakistan aims to maintain a tricky balance of regional interests: managing its relationships with India (which colour its stance towards Afghanistan); maintaining China as a counterbalance to both the US and India and as a source of economic benefits including as a major energy transit hub; managing disagreements with Iran over the strategic approach to Afghanistan and Central Asia, whilst simultaneously aiming to benefit from energy deals. Internally, Pakistan faces major concerns including on state control over militants, and achieving improved economic stability and growth. Relations with Afghanistan itself have been schizophrenic and troubled, despite geography, ethnic bonds, shared Pashtun culture, a porous border and large amounts of aid from Pakistan for reconstruction and civilian assistance. However, for almost two decades, Islamabad's partnership in Afghanistan has been limited to the Afghan Taliban and its affiliates. It is difficult to predict what will be Islamabad's relationship with Afghanistan after the impending security transition, because this in turn will depend on what kind of Afghanistan is left behind.

## The Roles & Interests of Regional Powers

From a regional perspective, the effect of the urgent needs of the Afghan and Pakistani economies, coupled with the growing energy needs of rising regional powers such as India and China, could play a transformative role for relations between states in the region. While regional economic integration is not the guaranteed panacea it is presented as being by some, none the less, significant steps are being taken to advance through practical steps that could eventually prove to have broader importance.

Increased fora for regional collaboration, such as the recently formed Heart of Asia initiative, are taking practical steps in areas of common interests such as counter-terrorism, border control, crisis management and counter-narcotics. As this process proceeds, it will be necessary to address the competing geo-strategic economic visions and bilateral tensions that act as obstacles towards regional integration. In this instance, the international community, and in particular the EU, can play a positive role in dissipating tensions in key cases such as relations between India and Pakistan or the US and Iran, via support to bridge the bilateral "trust gap"; and in supporting discussions between key regional powers on common interest areas in Afghanistan in particular. Bilateral aid to Pakistan and Afghanistan should include a strong focus on interventions to combat extremism of mindsets. Issues that raise tensions across the region- such

as the insurgency in Balochistan or the financing of radical or militant groups - require closer international cooperation, neutral external assistance and greater engagement. Mutual economic concerns can be leveraged at the international and regional levels, towards achieving greater regional peace and stability. China, Iran and the Central Asian states are all key stakeholders, whose shared interest be leveraged to counter the rise of extremism in Pakistan in particular, including through the development of a regional strategy to counter insurgency, bring law and order to the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan. A peaceful Afghanistan can serve as a land bridge to South Asia, the Middle East, Far East and Central Asia.

The ways in which the different sources of tension in both Afghanistan and Pakistan develop and interplay with regional powers' interests will largely determine the region's future. The short-term challenges that each country confronts and the uncertainty surrounding the future role of the US in the region has inevitably lead to hedging strategies, deliberately conceived to be adaptable depending on how different geopolitical outcomes may play out. Behind these regional hedging strategies lie a diverse range of specifically national interests. While these are generally historically based and deep-rooted, most are gradually evolving with the changing context of the region.

In the case of greater regional economic integration, new economic forces have the potential of transforming different sets of bilateral relations and regional dynamics on the whole. The growing energy needs of rising global powers such as China and India are especially relevant in this regard. Their own national interests and economic power could serve to alleviate key bilateral tensions between countries such as India and Pakistan. Close cooperation, and in some cases, external assistance will however be needed so that growing external interests in areas such as mineral investments do not result in new tensions due to increased competition.

Without adequate knowledge of the evolving interests, changing policies and seemingly contradictory actions of regional powers - and the will to apply that knowledge - Western peace-building efforts in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the region will be relegated to failure. Understanding these fundamental issues is therefore a basic step to being able to deal constructively with the sources of tension that affect Afghanistan, Pakistan and the region itself. Recognising and leveraging positive bilateral dynamics, as well as the roles that can be played by "organic" regional fora with confidence-building and multilateral cooperation potential, such as the SCO, RECCA, the Heart of Asia, will also be key steps towards this end.

Five specific regional powers have been identified as being critical to how the future of both Afghanistan and Pakistan, and of the region will play out:

• India
• Iran
• China
• Russia
• Saudi Arabia

Others, such as the Central Asian states, other Gulf States, and Turkey are implicated actors, with real interests and concerns in relation to both countries, but do not have the same depth and level of implication and/or influence as the above "big five" regional powers.

DR. EMMA HOOPER & JUAN GARRIGUES

## The Five Main Regional Powers

The tables below provide a schematic overview of the main interests and red lines for the five most important regional powers for Afghanistan and Pakistan. These points are drawn from the research done under the project, as well as from previous research projects with similar themes, by other organisations: (see Further Reading section).

"Interests" are defined here as issues, concerns or objectives whose development or outcomes directly concern the national interests of the regional power involved. "Red lines" are those issues, concerns or objectives whose development or outcomes are so important to the national interests of a particular regional power, that any serious escalation would result in a change in policy with potentially important repercussions for Afghanistan and/or Pakistan, and/or for the other regional powers and stakeholders concerned.

### Table 1: Regional Powers' Interests in Afghanistan & Pakistan

| 1. INDIA |
|---|
| **Interests**<br>• *Preventing Afghanistan from becoming a terrorist safe haven*<br>• *Countering increased Pakistani influence over events in Afghanistan*<br>• *Preventing rising radicalism and Islamic militancy in Afghanistan and Pakistan from influencing its own Muslim minority population, thus putting India's social cohesion in danger*<br>• *Obtaining access to raw materials in Afghanistan to meet the needs of India's growing population*<br>• *Ending the reported use of the Lashkar e Tayyeba as a proxy by the Pakistani ISI to act against India*<br>• *Engaging with the nationalist insurgency in Balochistan and across the border in Afghanistan, regarded by some observers as a counterbalance to Pakistani ISI pro-Taliban support*<br>• *Competing robustly on economic competition with Pakistan in Afghanistan, which also provides India with a rationale for support to the Afghan government and for active Indian outreach to Iran*<br>• *Gaining the upper hand in Indo-China rivalry, which spills over into Pakistan*<br>• *The Kashmir issue, in dispute with Pakistan (unresolved since 1947)* |
| **Additional Interests**<br>• *Increasing coordination with Iran, to counter Sunni Islamist militant groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan and to establish commercial and energy routes through Afghanistan to Central Asia*<br>• *Using international cooperation in Afghanistan to project India as a key global power with geo-strategic pre-eminence in the Indian Ocean basin; shaping regional security and economic arrangements; and creating regional fora such as RECCA.*<br>• *Avoiding escalation in water disputes with Pakistan (eg Wullar Barrage) with water shortages being blamed on India by the anti-India elements on the Pakistan side* |
| **Red Lines**<br>• ***A Taliban government in Afghanistan with close ties to Pakistan***<br>• ***Pakistan controlled by Islamist militants***<br>• ***Escalation in conflict with Pakistan over Kashmir***<br>• ***Further high-scale terrorist attacks in India organised from Pakistan territory (such as the Lashkar e Tayyeba 2008 attacks in Mumbai)***<br>• ***A major escalation in other potential conflict triggers with Pakistan, such as the Sir Creek boundary, Siachen, and water issues including the Wullar Barrage*** |

MAPPING THE SOURCES OF TENSION AND THE INTERESTS OF REGIONAL POWERS
IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

## 2. IRAN

**Interests**
- *Avoiding a long-term US military presence in Afghanistan*
- *Undermining the success of the US military presence in Afghanistan, yet simultaneously seeking international recognition by the US at the international level through cooperation on regional issues*
- *Maintaining contacts with all relevant Afghan actors*
- *Countering the rise of Taliban influence in Afghanistan, which has close links to Saudi Arabia*
- *Combating Saudi-Wahhabi involvement in Pakistan as a counter-influence to that of Shi'a Iran*
- *Countering threats from growing Sunni extremism in Pakistan and Afghanistan*
- *Combatting the drug trade stemming from Afghanistan*
- *Continuing to maintain simultaneous apparently contradictory stances with some regional partners (Pakistan, China)*
- *Expanding economic ties with Afghanistan and India*
- *Securing energy and communication routes to India, China etc.*
- *Preventing Sunni Jundullah terrorists from operating across the border with Iran in Pakistani Balochistan*
- *Avoiding negative spillover from Balochi nationalism in Pakistan*
- *Maintaining regime security in Afghanistan to avoid a situation of chaos which could alter its own domestic situation*
- *Within Pakistan, counteracting the effects of Pakistan's reliance on the US and Pakistan's support for the Taliban*

**Additional Interests**
- *Avoiding an increase in, and decreasing the number of, Afghan refugees in Iran*
- *Curbing the illicit drug economy, which badly impacts Iran's population*
- *Furthering its 'soft-power' regional influence in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and the rest of Central Asia*
- *Reducing its own energy burden through transit fees and benefits*

**Red Lines**
- ***The return of a Taliban Emirate (with close historical links to Saudi Arabia) in Afghanistan***
- ***The US using military bases in Afghanistan against Iran***
- ***Pakistan controlled by Islamist militants***

## 3. CHINA

**Interests**
- *Access to raw materials in Afghanistan for growing internal demand*
- *Impeding the training of Uighur separatists in Pakistan and FATA in particular due to internal security concerns*
- *Using close relations with Pakistan as a lever of influence with Afghanistan and US and as a "soft" challenge against India*
- *Maintaining Gwadar port as a quasi-Chinese naval outpost to protect oil supply lines from the Middle East, and to counter both the US presence in Central Asia and India's influence in the region*
- *Protecting China's mineral and infrastructure interests in Balochistan*

**Additional Interests**
- *Increased military cooperation on China-Pakistan border, including in Gilgit-Baltistan, due to its incomplete incorporation into the Pakistani state and the resultant institutional vacuum and growing Sunni-Shi'a sectarian violence and tensions*
- *Apparent intent to establish one or more military bases in FATA and thus potentially to increase China's security role in Pakistan, creating a military network across Pakistan from Gwadar to FATA to oversee the transit of goods to Xinjiang[1]*
- *Keeping the SCO primarily focused on economic (vs political and geostrategic) issues*

**Red Lines**
- *Pakistan controlled by Islamist militants*
- *Growth of (Uighur) Muslim extremism on Chinese territory, supported from across the border with Pakistan*
- *The return of a Taliban emirate in Afghanistan*
- *Confrontation with the US over Pakistan*

**1.** Sources: Project consultations; and http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/MJ26Df03.html

DR. EMMA HOOPER & JUAN GARRIGUES

## 4. RUSSIA

**Interests**
- *The maintenance of functional governance in Afghanistan, to obviate the need for direct engagement to counter radical Islam in the region after Afghanistan experience in the 1980s*
- *Continued cultivation of close ties with the former Northern Alliance groups to avoid the expansion of Islamic militant groups influence in Northern Afghanistan and Central Asia*
- *Countering US efforts to politically and economically draw Central Asia away from Russian influence and using US-NATO withdrawal in this objective*
- *Avoiding a long term US military presence in Afghanistan while benefiting from it as a buffer against Islamist terrorist groups.*
- *Stemming the flow of narcotics (seen as a large-scale domestic security challenge)*

**Additional Interests**
- *Expanding its security presence in Central Asia*
- *Developing ties with Iran as an important economic partner, including for combating the rise of US economic interests in Afghanistan*

**Red Lines**
- ***A substantial increase in the inflow of narcotics onto Russian territory***
- ***The return of a Taliban emirate in Afghanistan***
- ***Pakistan controlled by Islamist militants***
- ***Rising instability in Central Asia as a result of an increased Islamist militancy in Afghanistan and Pakistan***
- ***Central Asia dropping out of its 'sphere of influence'***

## 5. SAUDI ARABIA

**Interests**
- *Ideological:*
- *Promote itself as the unifier of the Sunni community; officially promoting the Wahhabi variant of Sunni Islam (closely associated with the Salafi school of thought, which justifies the use of violence, though Wahhabism does not)*
- *Preventing ongoing war within the Sunni community, partly because it considers this would benefit Iran*
- *Containing Iran, demonizing its role as a Shi'a threat in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia, using Afghanistan as a proxy battleground between Riyadh and Teheran*
- *Continuing to "externalize" the radical Islamist threat, fomented outside and repressed inside*
- *Minimising the threat from an Al Qaeda-Taliban axis, regarding the latter as heavily linked to the former, and hence as a threat to its own internal stability*
- *Maintaining its close relationship with Pakistan including through large aid donations, investments and oil concessions*
- *Maintaining the status quo in Pakistan: specifically, avoiding the rise to pre-eminence of democratic forces capable of re-establishing the authority of Pakistan as a Muslim, but secular, state*
- *Maintaining the Kingdom's privileged relations with the US*

**Additional Interests**
- *Bringing peace in Pakistan (ending violent terrorist activities, cross border insurgency), which is regarded a by-product of peace in Afghanistan*
- *Extending its sphere of political influence, by using its support of the mujahedeen against Soviet forces in the 1980s and its early recognition of the Taliban regime, to play a role in mediation talks in Afghanistan and Pakistan*
- *Capitalising on investment opportunities for Saudi Arabian business in both countries*
- *Containing intra-Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) rivalries (eg with Qatar over the latter's new role in regional security issues and Saudi Arabia's desire to be seen as a strategic lobbyist)*

**Red Lines**
- ***A civil war in Afghanistan following the departure of foreign troops, leading to the return of a Taliban Emirate linked to Al Qaeda, in Afghanistan; or a victory of warlords united in a renewed "Northern Alliance" supported by Iran, Russia, India***
- ***A substantive increase in Iranian influence in Afghanistan and/or Pakistan***
- ***An increase in al Qaeda's strength and influence in the region***
- ***Pakistan's implosion and resulting regional instability***

MAPPING THE SOURCES OF TENSION AND THE INTERESTS OF REGIONAL POWERS
IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

# Sources of Tension in Afghanistan & Pakistan With Regional Implications

The term "sources of tension" refers to issues that are relevant for both Afghanistan and Pakistan and which can act as fault lines, by creating friction or conflict, within each country and in the region. Each source of tension is explained below by identifying its main manifestations or examples in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Some manifestations are applicable to both countries, and have been collectively presented. Others manifest themselves differently in Afghanistan or Pakistan, and have therefore been listed separately for each country. In all instances, the sources of tension and manifestations have impacts and implications that go beyond a single country's national borders.

A series of tables below present the six main sources of tension in Afghanistan and Pakistan and their manifestations schematically. The sources of tension are:

1. Governance
2. Social and economic issues
3. Conflict in Afghanistan
4. Ethnicity and sectarianism
5. Radicalisation
6. Militancy

## Table 2: Source of Tension 1 – Governance

| 1.1 GOVERNANCE IN AFGHANISTAN | |
|---|---|
| One of the most significant concerns as international troops and aid begin to exit Afghanistan is how weak national institutions will cope with increasing internal tensions and the upcoming institutional requirements for economic development. In a changed context with new local actors, ordinary Afghans suffer from daily corruption and lack of rule of law. Many domestic actors and external observers have put in to question the highly centralised political system that emerged after the Bonn conference in 2001. Reforming this system and addressing the urgent governance needs of Afghans will prove challenging due to the increasingly-polarised positions of different groups within Afghanistan. | |
| **MANIFESTATIONS** | |
| **Patronage & Corruption** | • Corruption has been linked to powerful figures in the government<br>• Large amounts of international aid to Afghanistan are calculated to have been lost as a result[1]<br>• Corruption has spread in to all areas of life, from public health to justice<br>• A new 'mafia' of well connected business interests and entrepreneurial commanders has emerged<br>• Drug trafficking is often linked to formal power brokers |
| **Weak Rule of Law** | • The blurred lines between the formal and informal power structures have created complex patronage systems<br>• The judicial system lacks enforcement power and adequate procedures<br>• Concerns over the separation of powers due to the use of Presidential decrees to sideline Parliament |
| **Taliban Parallel Structures** | • Justice and policing parallel structures created by the Taliban have gained acceptance in many areas of the country due to prevailing corruption and insecurity<br>• The Taliban have politically marginalized tribes and the key governance role their elders have traditionally played<br>• Western donors are now trying to marginalize the Taliban by creating new local elites |
| **Tensions Over Centralised Political Systems** | • Central government lacks the capacity to meet its obligations under the Constitution<br>• Non-Pashtun groups are mostly against the current centralized system (nominations to key positions by the President), as a defensive strategy against the threat of the rise of the Taliban in Pashtun areas system<br>• The 2010 elections created tensions in the Afghan parliament due to contested results and the role of a presidentially-selected special tribunal<br>• Upcoming 2014 elections are further exacerbating existing tensions |

DR. EMMA HOOPER & JUAN GARRIGUES

## 1.2 GOVERNANCE IN PAKISTAN

Whilst governance failures in Pakistan impact most strongly internally, none the less, together with socio-economic sources of tension, they act as triggers for the other primary regionally-relevant sources of tension (radicalism, militancy, ethnic and sectarian tensions, and the conflict in Afghanistan). Domestically, the repeated failure to regard the people of Pakistan as citizens, rather than as clients of a patron state with mutual responsibilities and rights, creates a weak base for effective government. In parallel, non-state actors including feudal, tribal and other socially-sanctioned structures vie with one another for power, leading to further instability. Weak institutions compete with strong patron-client-based social structures, while public assets are stripped for distribution to supporters of patrons. Recent promising constitutional and legislative amendments have yet to be translated into meaningful implementation. Whilst none of these are new occurrences, a worsening law and order situation since 9/11 and particularly since 2007 mean that they combine to foster or exacerbate other key sources of tension with both regional and national implications.

### MANIFESTATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| **Indifferent State, Persistent Militants** | • State failures to provide for its citizens lead to fertile recruitment grounds for the Pakistani Taliban<br>• Militant groups try to fill void left by the state by providing basic services such as dispute resolution, access to swift justice, and urgent humanitarian aid |
| **The Role of the Armed Forces** | • The traditional power of the armed forces and secret services undermine the authority of civilian institutions<br>• While positive signs have emerged of political parties and institutions such as the judiciary standing up to armed forces interference, the civil-military gap is still large<br>• The role of ISI (secret services) is still perceived in neighbouring countries as leading an independent destabilising agenda |
| **Non-State Actors Fill Local Governance Role** | • Traditional institutions, patronage networks, criminal organisations and insurgents all step in to act as "local government", in areas where the state is weak or absent |
| **Low Level of Extension of Government Writ Into FATA** | • Less-than-full incorporation in the Federation leads to discriminatory legal structures, including collective punishment, lack of access to justice, to security and to development; and to the denial of civil and human rights, including political participation and low levels of law and order<br>• Non-applicability of the rule of law in some agencies of FATA (eg Waziristan)<br>• Taliban insurgents remain active creating conflict, instability, internal displacement and undermining local government institutions, including through dispensation of informal justice and dispute resolution<br>• Cross-border shelling into Kunar by the Pakistan army exacerbates tensions with Afghanistan |
| **Conflict & Ethnic Tensions in Balochistan** | • Power remains in the hands of the military and intelligence agencies, impeding a political process to end a near-civil war in the province<br>• A nationalist insurgency, religious/sectarian extremists and targeted killings of professionals<br>• Reported support for nationalists from Afghanistan and India leads to heightened regional tensions<br>• Nationalist forces (eg the Balochistan Liberation Army) appropriate commissions from the local business community and mine owners<br>• Smugglers & crime syndicates result in increased levels of corruption, which erode local institutions through bypassing formal systems<br>• Unchallenged "disappearances" of people in Balochistan by the Pakistani state create local resistance to its writ, specifically manifested via opposition to the activities of the armed forces and the secret services<br>• The confused mandates of the "reach" of federal vs provincial law enforcement agencies and security apparatus lead to lack of coordination, duplication of effort and competition between law enforcement entities active in the province<br>• Presence of the Afghan Taliban Quetta Shura and terrorist networks along the Pakistan-Afghan border of the province; create tensions with Afghanistan<br>• Conflict in Balochistan over ownership and control over mineral resources can potentially escalate and further destabilise region, given the interests of both the state and regional powers (eg China) |

**Table 3: Source of Tension 2 - Socio-Economic Issues**

| 2.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES IN AFGHANISTAN | |
|---|---|
| Though overall socio-economic performance has been patchy, throughout the last decade, important socio-economic indicators, such as the infant mortality rate and the percentage of children in schools, have improved considerably in Afghanistan. In 2010/2011, real GDP growth reached 8.4%, with areas mostly dependent on international economic aid such as construction and transportation doing particularly well. This international dependency creates significant internal tensions and pre-supposes a major challenge for the long-term sustainability of the Afghan economy. To address the important poverty, food security and employment challenges the country faces, it will be vital to shift from a security-based economy to an agriculture-based economy (where about 70% of Afghans work). | |
| **Dependence on International Aid** | • Afghanistan is likely to need US $7000 million annually during the next decade for institutions to keep functioning[2] <br> • War and the aid economy has created "dirty bargains" with local elites at the sub national level |
| **Growing Economic Disparity** | • Economic disparities between rich and poor, urban and rural populations are increasing <br> • Internal migration is also consequently affected |
| **A Fragile Private Sector** | • While considerable investment has reached Afghanistan in the past decade, the private enterprises which have benefitted most, are linked to patronage or have ties with corruption <br> • The danger of Afghan entrepreneurs that have done well in the last decade moving out of the country with their money |
| **Challenges of Dealing With Natural Resources** | • The important mineral reserves found in Afghanistan have attracted the interests and investments of region powers creating a new kind of competition <br> • Afghan public institutions are not currently adequately equipped to ensure transparency; "crony capitalism" that takes the benefits away from the people, abounds |

| 2.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES IN PAKISTAN | |
|---|---|
| As in the case of governance, socio-economic issues also act as triggers to exacerbate other sources of tension. In Pakistan, state and society are highly interconnected, with kinship, class, caste, clan and ethnicity usually taking precedence over institutional (state) affiliations. Feudal, tribal and other socially-sanctions structures mediate socio-economic issues including access to assets, labour market, job opportunities and social mobility. Critical challenges include: a stagnant economy in deterioration since 2007, with a population growing at 1.6% (currently approximately 181 million), poor economic indicators, and a growing disparity between rich and poor. Access to water, power and food security constitute critical socio-economic issues for the majority of the population. Food supply-related civil unrest was witnessed annually in Pakistan between 2007-2010, resulting in the creation of a new class of poor. | |
| **Lack of Economic Growth, A Growing Population** | • Low economic growth rates do not keep pace with population growth <br> • The country lacks a coherent strategy to address economic problems and growing gap between rich and poor <br> • The country faces a balance of payments crisis and severe energy shortages <br> • The productive economy has been stagnant for the past four years: (GDP 3.7% in 2011-12, the same level as in 2007-8) ; and Pakistan currently has the slowest economic growth rate (2.4% in 2011) in South Asia[3] <br> • There are severe intra-provincial disparities, particularly for Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan which experiences the most inequitable distribution of development funds within the Federation with consequent impacts on service delivery and low levels of development indicators |
| **Illegal Economic Activity Linked to Criminality and Militancy** | • Absence of job opportunities and lack of state support systems for the poor and indigent leads to extreme coping behaviours <br> • Pakistani Taliban resorting to kidnappings for ransom to finance their activities; criminals become easy recruits for Talibanisation for financial gain |
| **Lack of Access to Water, Power & Food Security** | • Severe water shortages; poor water management, inefficient distribution, poor drainage negatively impact (poor) harvests <br> • Chronic energy deficit; power shortages due to distribution issues, institutional debt, poor management, inadequate supply <br> • Rising food prices, inadequate distribution; high proportion of income spent on food by the poor |

**2.** Source: World Bank estimates.

**3.** http://www.finance.gov.
pk/survey/chapter_12/01-
GrowthAndStabilization.pdf.

DR. EMMA HOOPER & JUAN GARRIGUES

## 4.1 ETHNICITY & SECTARIANISM IN AFGHANISTAN

Ethnic boundaries are transcended by bilingualism, intermarriage, religious and political ideology in Afghanistan, where local-level identities and group interests tend to be associated with a political or regional unit - not with ethnicity. However, the country as a whole has experienced Pashtun-dominated government in one form or other for much of its modern history. While conflict prior to 2001 has been wrongly portrayed as an ethnic struggle, ethnically-motivated violence was none the less very much present in Afghanistan. Since 2001, ethnic patronage networks have been critically strengthened, conditioned by the formation of ethnic electoral coalitions based on a proliferating system of patronage politics.

### Manifestations

| | |
|---|---|
| **Growing Ethnic Divides** | • Former Northern Alliance groups' opposition to current negotiation with Taliban strategy has led to increasing tensions with the government and political divides along ethnic lines<br>• The last decade of international presence in Afghanistan has resulted in an influx of foreign funds that have further exacerbated ethnic group divisions<br>• Political parties have not developed beyond ethnic lines, in part due to institutional weakness, thus increasing a toxic system of patronage politics |
| **Fears of Ethnic Conflict** | • Concerns by some Afghan, regional and international actors that negotiations with the Taliban could lead to conflict and a de-facto north-south split of the country<br>• Marginal fears that calls for a Pashtunistan would exacerbate nationalist and separatist forces in Pakistan and create a separatist movement in Afghanistan<br>• The arming of local groups based on ethnic lines (eg local *arbaki* armed militias*)* by the US and international forces as a dangerous exit strategy<br>• Fears that national security institutions, such as the Afghan National Army, might fracture along ethno-regional lines |
| **Sectarian Violence** | • While sectarian violence is rare in Afghanistan, attacks on the 10-15% Afghan Shi'a minority community (such as those on 2011 Ashura day) have occurred<br>• These raised concern as to the potential for al Qaeda's and other regional actors to create internal tensions and draw actors such as Iran and Pakistan into conflict |

## 4.2 ETHNICITY & SECTARIANISM IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan is experiencing a rising incidence of sectarian violence (Sunni-Shi'a, anti-Ahmadi). Targeted political killings are overlaid with sectarian motives. Growing regional/external Sunni and Shi'a involvement in fomenting sectarian violence is likely to continue unless the Pakistani state itself is able to clear its own territory of sectarian militant groups. Ethnic violence finds expression in the port city of Karachi, via the nationalist insurgency in Balochistan, and increasingly in areas of Sindh and the Punjab as well.

### Manifestations

| | |
|---|---|
| **Sunni-Shi'a & Other Forms of Sectarian Violence** | • Rising incidence of near-daily sectarian violence targeting Shi'a populations, particularly in Quetta, Balochistan; Kurram Agency (Waziristan); Gilgit-Baltistan; Hyderabad (Sindh) and in Karachi<br>• Weak or intentionally absent government responses to sectarian violence<br>• Sufi shrines targeted by bombs in the Punjab province and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa<br>• Anti-Baloch discrimination on sectarian grounds in Iranian Balochistan (a Sunni minority in Shi'a-majority country) spills over into Pakistani Balochistan<br>• Increased minority community, anti-Hindu, anti-Christian intolerance, expressed increasingly violently |
| **Increased Ethnic Divisions & Tensions** | • Despite Pakistan being a multi-ethnic state, the dominance of the state structure by one or two ethnic groups tends to augment ethnic tensions and violence<br>• Increasing ethno-sectarian-politically motivated violence in Karachi, where it is hard to distinguish between the targets and *modus operandi* of the sectarian, Taliban-led extremist, criminal groups and gang-related violence |
| **Centre-Periphery Ethnicity-Based Tensions** | • Political and military domination by Punjabis results in reluctance to devolve authority to provinces dominated by other ethnic groups, though it is somewhat mitigated by recent progress on devolution<br>• The three main ethnically-based nationalist movements (Balochistan, the Sindhudesh Movement in the 1980s, and the Muhajir Qaumi Movement in the 1990s) were brutally suppressed by the (Punjabi-dominated) state, with no room for accommodation and compromise |

MAPPING THE SOURCES OF TENSION AND THE INTERESTS OF REGIONAL POWERS
IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

**Table 6: Source of Tension 5 – Radicalisation**

| 5. RADICALISATION | |
|---|---|
| The growing influence of radical groups has become a major source of tension in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. Often inter-linked, these groups spread hate and terror throughout the region. The non-violent radicalisation of mindsets in Afghanistan, Pakistan and across the region is achieved through a range of means, including the mainstream educational curriculum, the media, and public opinion. These messages call out not only against the United States but also against diversity, different religions, Muslim sects, ethnicities etc, leading to increasing conservatism, nationalism and exclusionary interpretations of Islam. | |
| **Manifestations** | |
| **Growing Anti-US/Western Sentiment** | • The presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan as well as the failures of the US/Western presence to improve livelihoods has created a fertile ground for recruitment <br> • Continued US drone military operations in FATA inadvertently provide new opportunities to radicalise elements of the population <br> • In a June 2012 Pew Research poll, 74% of Pakistanis considered the US an enemy, up from 69% the previous year[4] |
| **Radicalisation of Media & Education** | • Taliban-established parallel education media and justice structures spreading messages of hate in Afghanistan <br> • Allegations of Iran using its 'soft power' in Afghanistan, Tajikistan etc. in irresponsible ways that can increase radicalisation based on anti-Western sentiment, sectarian affiliation etc <br> • Ethically irresponsible, consequence-oblivious private visual media in Pakistan routinely airs extremist, ultra-nationalist views <br> • Lack of development of a counter-ideology to combat mindsets of extremism in Pakistan results in people taking refuge in a more tangible, rightist, religious ideology. |
| **Radicalisation Across Socio-economic Groups in Pakistan** | • Different manifestations in different socio-economic groups: <br>   - For the lowest groups, deprivation directly links with criminal and militant activity <br>   - For the lower-middle groups ideology, politics, identity and nationalism are the main drivers of attitude <br>   - For the elites, radicalism is also spread via mainstream public and private educational institutions <br> • In addition, alienation and politics have given rise to extreme social groupings (eg *Hezb e Tahrir*, the *Defa-i-Pakistan* Council) |

4. http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2297/pakistan-united-states-extremeist-groups-barack-obama-economic-aid-military-aid-taliban-haqqani-kashmir-ayousaf-raza-gilani-imran-khan-tehreek-e-insaf-indi

DR. EMMA HOOPER & JUAN GARRIGUES

## Table 7: Source of Tension 6 - Militancy

### 6. MILITANCY

Since the attacks of September 11th, 2001, militant groups in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia have become more closely linked. Afghan militant groups linked to the former Taliban regime have led the cross-border insurgency from their refuges in FATA, Khyber Pakhtunkwa province and Balochistan, in the bordering regions of Pakistan. As a consequence of failure to adequately address the presence of these militant groups in areas where government control is weak or absent, the Pakistani state has had to face the emergence of its own Pakistani Taliban, under the leadership of the *Tehrik e Taliban*. Although the numerous groups both within the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban have different objectives (see Militancy box, below), they generally share the call for international forces to leave the region and for (narrow interpretations of) Islamic law (*Shari'a*) to play a more important role in the state.

### Manifestations

| | |
|---|---|
| **The Afghan Taliban** | • The extent of the control by the Quetta Shura over other groups such as the Haqqani and Hekmatyar networks, is difficult to assess accurately<br>• The Afghan Taliban lead the insurgency in Afghanistan through attacks on foreign troops, government targets and the general population<br>• They are mainly based in sanctuaries in Pakistan (eg Quetta, North Waziristan), leading to accusations from the US and the Afghan government of complicity by the Pakistan security forces |
| **The "Pakistani" Taliban** | • Responsible for cross-border insurgency and domestic terror attacks<br>• Increased the spread of their presence since 2007, from the border regions with Afghanistan (FATA, NWFP) to across (urban) Pakistan<br>• Domestic blow-back, including the spread of "fundraising" for the Pakistani Taliban via criminal activity by non-state actors; the criminalisation of the activities of the Pakistani Taliban and criminals falling under the influence of the Taliban |
| **Militant Networks in the Punjab & Karachi** | • There are cross-linkages between militancy and criminal and political violence<br>• Karachi is a locus for the miliant-criminal nexus, where crime bankrolls violence<br>• Karachi has become a hideout for Al Qaeda and its affiliates due to its size and heterogeneous ethno-linguistic composition; Faisabad and Lahore are reportedly major grounds for Al Qaeda and affiliate activity<br>• Al Qaeda is thought to have entered into alliances with "homegrown" militants (eg the *Tehrik e Taliban e Pakistan*) |
| **Conflict in Balochistan** | • Ongoing Balochi nationalist insurgency Sectarian terrorism/militancy; targeting of Shi'a azaras by *Lashkar e Jhangvi* (linked to *Tehrik e Taliban e Pakistan, Al Qaeda* and Afghan Taliban groups) |
| **Conflict in FATA** | • Worsening security including in the Tribal Agencies which are refuges for the Haqqani network refuge in North Waziristan<br>• The Pakistan army's apparent reluctance to eliminate the sanctuary for the Haqqani network in North Waziristan has also benefitted the "Pakistani Taliban", Al Qaeda and regional *jihadi* groups, which all exploit the same territory |
| **Central Asia Terrorist Groups (IMU, *Hizb ul Tahrir* etc)** | • The IMU has used its involvement in the Afghanistan insurgency to regroup and establish itself both in Pakistan's FATA and northern Afghanistan<br>• Export of transnational terrorism to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and within Central Asia<br>• Links to illegal cross-border economies including drugs, human trafficking, via Afghanistan and Pakistan<br>• Refugees from Afghanistan, especially along the Tajikistan border |

## BOX 1: The Militancy Map

| | Predominantly Foreign | Predominantly Pakistani |
|---|---|---|
| **Anti Pakistan** | Al Qaeda; assortment of foreign militants based in FATA | Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan; Harkatul Jihad e Islami; Lashkar e Jhangvi; assortment of splinter groups – the 'Punjabi Taliban' |
| **Sectarian** | Jandullah (Malik Ragi group) | Sipah e Sahaba Pakistan; Lashkar e Jhangvi; Sunni Tehrik; Sipah e Muhammad |
| **Anti-US/NATO** | Al Qaeda; assortment of foreign militants based in FATA; Quetta Shura Taliban; Haqqani network; Hizb e Islami; | An anti-US stance is the unifying factor for all militant groups, though they differ on issues: eg, willingness to fight Pakistan, sectarian killing, waging *jihad* over Kashmir |
| **Anti-India** | Hizb ul Mujahideen; Al Baraq | Lashkar e Tayyeba; Jaish e Muhammad; Al Badr, Harkatul Mujahideen l Alami; Harkatul Jihad e Islami |

Source: Adapted from CIDOB Pakistan Yearbook 2012, chapter by Hooper & Yusuf, from Moeed Yusuf 2011

MAPPING THE SOURCES OF TENSION AND THE INTERESTS OF REGIONAL POWERS IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

## Afterword

Viewed from the perspective of 2016, the conflict in Afghanistan has become more regionalised than ever. The interests of the five key regional powers in both Afghanistan and Pakistan have increased, underscored by geopolitical tectonic shifts and proxy wars elsewhere (Syria, Iraq, Yemen) which affect what happens in the two countries of the project´s focus. The reported spread of Daesh and new inroads by the Taliban in Afghanistan, Pakistan´s struggle with domestic militants, and new or strengthened alliances with Iran, Russia, and above all, China – Pakistan´s "all-weather friend", bring a renewed interest in, and stake for, the regional powers in what plays out in Afghanistan, the effects on Pakistan and how these may benefit regional players´ own interests, or otherwise. The "red lines" identified in 2012 basically remain unchanged for all regional players. The strained domestic institutions identified then remain strained, the vacuum left by the withdrawal of most Western troops is being filled in one way or other mainly by regional or by non-state actors. The Taliban´s interest in peace talks or in a continued insurgency ebb and flow according to prevailing circumstances, and democracy in Afghanistan at grassroots level remains elusive. Energy needs in both Afghanistan and Pakistan remain insufficiently met. Governance too remains a key unresolved issue in both countries. Pakistan´s relationship with India see-saws from hope to stasis (or worse) and back again, though with cautious hopes for improvements at the present time. There is a glimpse of what fulfilment of the potential of Afghanistan as a regional economic hub may look like, though there is a long way to go still. But there is hope, and aspirations for a better future for all countries in the region may well hinge on regional economic development, particularly as fatigue with the ongoing conflict truly sets in, giving way – perhaps - to soft power politics.

**Emma Hooper & Juan Garrigues**
2016

## Further Reading

### CIDOB STAP RP Series

http://www.cidob.org/es/temas_regiones/asia/sources_of_tension_in_afghanistan_pakistan_regional_perspectives

Aziz, Masood. *Afghanistan: The Geopolitics of Regional Economic Integration – The Emergence of China as the New Facilitator*, September 2012

Hakimi, Aziz. *The Changing Nature of Power and Sovereignty in Afghanistan*, September 2012

Hussain, Zahid. *Sources of Tension in Afghanistan & Pakistan: A Regional Perspective*, December 2011

Ganguly, Sumit. *India's Role in Afghanistan*, January 2012

Price, Gareth. *India and Pakistan: Changing the Narratives*, July 2012

Rumi, Raza Ahmad. *Pakistan: Ungoverned Spaces*, July 2012

Semple, Michael. *Power to the Periphery?The Elusive Consensus on How to Decentralize Afghanistan*, July 2012

Siddiqa, Ayesha. *Expansion by Stealth: China's Interests, Infrastructure & Investments in Pakistan and Afghanistan*. January 2012

Siddique, Abubakar. *Afghanistan's Ethnic Divides*. January 2012

### Additional Reading:

Abbas, Hassan. *Militancy in Pakistan's Borderlands: Implications for the Nation and for Afghan Policy*, Century Foundation 2010

Aoun, Joy et al. *Religious Movements, Militancy & Conflict in South Asia*, CSIS July 2012

Bokhari, Laila. "Pakistan: Dealing with Peace in the Tribal Areas?" *NOREF Policy Brief* 22 November 2010

Borchgrevink, Kaja; Berg Harpviken, Kristian. "Taking Stock: Madrasa Reform in Pakistan", *NOREF Policy Brief* 6 July 2011

Braithwaite, Rodric. *Afghantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-81*

*CIDOB Yearbook 2012 on Pakistan*: Chapter 4, Pakistan: Future Scenarios & the Regional Context. Hooper, Emma and Yusuf, Moeed. http://www.cidob.org/es/publicaciones/anuarios/anuario_internacional_cidob/anuario_internacional_cidob_2012_pakistan_perfil_de_pais/(language)/eng-US

Cohen, Stephen P. "Coping with a failing Pakistan", *NOREF Policy Brief*, 22 February 2011

Fair, C. Christine. *India in Afghanistan and Beyond: Opportunities and Constraints*, Century Foundation 2010

Foust, Joshua. *Post-Soviet Central Asian National Interests in Afghanistan*, Century Foundation 2010

Gregg, Tom. *Is a Regional Pact to Stabilize Afghanistan Possible?* NYU Center for International Cooperation, July 2010

Hameed, Sadiqa. *Prospects for Indian-Pakistani Cooperation in Afghanistan*, CSIS August 2012

International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan. The Long Hard Road to the 2012 Transition", *Asia Report* No 236, October 2012

Jinnah Institute, Islamabad "Another Approach to Madrassa Reform", *Policy Brief* October 22 2012

Lamb, Robert D. Et al. *Governance & Militancy in Pakistan*, CSIS May 2011

Kugelman, Michael. "Decentralisation in Pakistan: the lost opportunity of the 18th amendment", *NOREF Policy Brief*, 5 November 2012

Laurenti, Jeffrey. *Afghanistan Agonistes: The Many Stakes in a Thirty Years War*, Century Foundation 2011

Lieven, Anatol. *Pakistan – A Hard Country*, March 2012

Lodhi, Maleeha (ed). *Pakistan: Beyond the Crisis State* 2011

Mezzera, Marco. "The Nature of a Friendship: Making sense of Sino-Pakistani Relations", *NOREF Policy Brief* 27 September 2011

Mir, Amir. "China Seeks Military Bases in Pakistan", *Asia Times* October 26, 2011

Muhammad Khan, Riaz. *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism and Resistance to Modernity* July 2011

Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies. *Conflict and Insecurity in Balochistan*, 2012

Peters, Gretchen. *Combatting Terrorism: Haqqani Network Financing: The Evolution of an Industry,* US Council for Foreign Relations, July 2012

Saghafi-Ameri, Nasser. "Prospects for peace and stability in Afghanistan", *Afghanistan Regional Dialogue Background Paper* No. 1 June 2011, SIPRI Afghanistan Regional Dialogue

(eds.) Kanwal Sheikh, Mona, Shaikh, Farzana, Price, Gareth. "Pakistan: Regional Rivalries, Local Impacts", *DIIS Report* 2012:12

DR. EMMA HOOPER & JUAN GARRIGUES

Starr, S. Frederick; Kutchins, Andrew C., et al. *The Key to Success in Afghanistan: A Modern Silk Road Strategy*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program, May 2010

Torjesen, Stina. "Afghanistan and the Regional Powers: History Not Repeating itself?" *NOREF Policy Brief*,9 October 2012

Strand, Arne. "Norwegian Non-Military Collaboration with Afghanistan: A Slightly Different Approach" *NOREF Policy Brief*,17 September 2012

Suhrke, Astrid. "Towards 2014 and Beyond: NATO, Afghanistan and the Heart of Asia". *NOREF Brief*, August 2012.

Tellis, Ashley and Mukharji, Aroop, (eds.) *Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan?* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2010

Trenin, Dmitri; and Malashenko, Alexei. *Afghanistan: A View from Moscow.* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2010

## Consultations Held

The following individuals were consulted either via individual meetings in Europe, Afghanistan and Pakistan; or through Round Table discussion fora on the STAP RP project (in Barcelona March 2012; and in Oslo 2012). The conclusions presented in this paper are the authors' own.

Abdullah Abdullah, presidential election contender, head of the National Coalition of Afghanistan

Cyril Almeida, journalist, *Dawn* newspaper Pakistan

Masood Aziz, former diplomat, former advisor to President Karzai, author, principal at CAEPD

Alamgir Babar, Additional Secretary, Afghanistan & Americas, Government of Pakistan

Monica Bernabé, Afghanistan Correspondent, *El Mundo* newspaper

Abdul Latif Bhat, Director, Kashmir International Research Centre

Rasheed Chaudhury, Head of Research, Free & Fair Elections Network (FAFEN)

Jon Boone, journalist; correspondent for *The Guardian* newspaper

Philip Boyle, formerly Political Counsellor, UK High Commission

Amer Durrani, World Bank Senior Transport Specialist

Anne Fahler, Consultant, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Afghanistan

Sumit Ganguly, Professor of Political Science at Indiana University,

Bloomington

Ashraf Ghani, former Presidential candidate and Chairman of the security transition committee

Yang Guanda, Second Secretary, Chinese Embassy, Kabul

Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director, Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), Pakistan

Ejaz Haidar, former Director, Jinnah Institute; journalist

Aziz Hakimi, Researcher, School of Oriental and African Studies, SOAS; visiting scholar, CMI Bergen

David Hansen, Director, Pakistan Program. Centre for International and Strategic Analysis (SISA)

Hussain Haroon, Pakistan's Special Representative to the UN

Kristian Harpviken, Director of the Peace Research Institute Oslo. Member of NEGAP

Humaira Hassan, former Ambassador of Pakistan to Spain; Ambassador of Pakistan to Portugal

Tore Hattrem, Norwegian Ambassador to Afghanistan

Riaz Mohammad Khan, former Foreign Secretary, Pakistan

Javaid Jalil Khattak, Director, Afghanistan, GoP

Hege M. Kolshus Hansen, Adviser, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, South Asia & Afghanistan Section

Luis Herruzo Madrid, Defence Attaché, Embassy of Spain to Afghanistan

Haseeb Humayoon, CEO, Qara Consulting Inc.

Zahid Hussain, author and journalist, Woodrow Wilson International Centre Pakistan Scholar, author

Syed Riffat Hussain, former Professor and former Chairman, Department of Defence & Strategic Studies, Quaid e Azam University; currently National Defence University (NDU)

Safdar Hussain, Research Analyst, Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS)

Vigdis Kjelseth, Political Adviser, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Islamabad

Bruce Koepke, former Political Officer, UNAMA Afghanistan; Senior Researcher, Armed Conflict and Conflict Management Programme, SIPRI

Dr. Radha Kumar, Delhi Policy Group, New Delhi

Sverre-Johan Kvale, former Ambassador to Kosovo, Senior Advisor at the Peace & Reconciliation Section, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Cecilie Landswerk, Ambassador to Pakistan, Royal Norwegian Embassy,

Grete Lochen, Deputy Chief of Mission, Norwegian Embassy Afghanistan

Maleeha Lodhi, former Pakistan Ambassador to the US, former High Commissioner to the UK; adviser on international relations to GEO TV

Georgy Machitidze, Deputy Head of Mission to Afghanistan, Embassy of the Russian Federation

Helena Malikyar, Independent Political Analyst and Commentator on Afghanistan

Robert Matthews, consultant on Afghanistan, Pakistan and US Foreign Policy, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, NOREF

Marco Mezzera, Senior Advisor, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, NOREF

Davood Moradian, former Senior Adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Professor of Political Science at the American University of Afghanistan

Wahid Mujda, former senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the Taliban government

Gautam Mukhopadhaya, Ambassador of India to Afghanistan

Sohail Naqvi, Executive Director Higher Education Commission

Basat Ozturk, Ambassador, Turkey

Ravi Palat, Professor of Sociology, Binghamton University, Senior Research Fellow Associate, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, CIDOB

Rouzbeh Parsi, Research Fellow, EU-ISS, Paris

Gareth Price, Senior Research Fellow, Asia Programme, Chatham House

Gonzalo Quintero Saravia, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to Pakistan

Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, former Ambassador of Pakistan to Iraq; Director General, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad

Raffaelllo Pantucci, Associate Fellow, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, King's College

Nicolás de Pedro, Researcher, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs CIDOB

Richard Ponzio, Senior Strategy and Policy Officer at US State Department, Washington DC

Ahmed Rashid, author, journalist

Mian Raza Rabbani, Senator, Deputy Secretary General Pakistan Peoples' Party

Ayesha Riaz, Additional Secretary, Europe & FODP, Government of Pakistan

Juan José Rubio de Urquía, Ambassador of Spain to Afghanistan

Raza Rumi, Executive Director, Jinnah Institute, Pakistan; governance expert; writer

Thomas Ruttig, founder and member, Afghan Analysts Network

Mohammed Sadiq, Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan

Saleem Safi, GEO TV current affairs programme host "Jirga"

Amrullah Saleh, Former head of the Afghan Secret Services, leader of the Green Trend Party and member of the Afghanistan National Front (ANF)

Michael Semple, Carr Center for Human Rights Policy Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University

Mikhael Shamahmoud, former Interior Deputy Minister, Director of USIP office

Naveed Shinwari, Director, Community Appraisal & Motivation Programme (CAMP), specialist on FATA

Hu Shisheng, Professor of South Asia studies, South Asia scholar at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR)

Ayesha Sidiqqa, author and independent social scientist

Abubakar Siddique, Senior Correspondent, Afghanistan and Pakistan for RFE/RL, researcher and writer

Herdis Sigurgrimsdottir, Communication Advisor, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, NOREF

Bernard Smith, Afghanistan Correspondent, *Al Jazeera*

Ekaterina Stepanova, Head, Peace and Conflict Studies Unit, Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), Moscow

Arne Strand, Deputy Director, Research Director, Coordinator: Peace and Conflict

Astri Suhrke, political scientist, Afghanistan expert

Elia Susanna i López, Assistant Professor, American University of Kabul

Shahrbanou Tadjbaksh, Researcher Associate, Peace Research Institute Oslo, PRIO

Stina Torjesen, University of Agder. Member of NEGAP

Roberto Toscano, former Ambassador of Italy to Iran; former Woodrow Wilson Public Policy Scholar

Olav-Nils Thue, Senior Advisor at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Vygaudas Usackas, EU Special Representative to Afghanistan

Félix Valdés, Special Ambassador for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Martine Van Bijlert, Co-Director, Afghan Analysts Network

Jordi Vaquer, Director, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, CIDOB

Francesc Vendrell, former European Union Representative to Afghanistan

Pere Vilanova, Professor of Political Science, UB and Senior Associated Fellow at CIDOB

Declan Walsh, journalist; correspondent for the New York Times

Marvin Weinbaum, Scholar in Residence, Middle East Institute Washington DC

Lars Gunnar Wigemark, EU Ambassador to Pakistan

Ann Wilkens, former Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan, with accreditation to Afghanistan; Board Member, Afghan Analysts Network

Hussein Yasa, Executive Director, Afghanistan Institute of Research & Analysis

Moeed Yusuf, South Asia Advisor, US Institute of Peace

Salman Zaidi, Deputy Director, Jinnah Institute

Faizullah Zaki, Spokesman of the Afghanistan National Front (ANF); Deputy Chairman Junbish party

# CHAPTER TWO:
# KEY PHENOMENA: THE TALIBAN, REFUGEES & THE BRAIN DRAIN, GOVERNANCE

## THE TALIBAN

- PREAMBLE: THIRD PARTY ROLES AND INSURGENCIES IN SOUTH ASIA
*Moeed Yusuf*

- THE PAKISTAN TALIBAN MOVEMENT: AN APPRAISAL
*Michael Semple*

- THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN
*Malaiz Daud*

## REFUGEES & THE BRAIN DRAIN

- PREAMBLE: AFGHANS AS SECOND-CLASS REFUGEES IN PARTS OF EUROPE
*Thomas Ruttig*

- "GOING, GOING... ONCE AGAIN GONE?" THE HUMAN CAPITAL OUTFLOW FROM AFGHANISTAN POST 2014 ELECTIONS
*Susanne Schmeidl*

- THE VOICES BEHING THE REFUGEE OUTFLOW FROM AFGHANISTAN
*Hameed Hakimi and Barin S. Haymon*

## GOVERNANCE

- PREAMBLE: GOVERNANCE & PAKISTAN´S TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY
*Senator Sherry Rehman*

- PAKISTAN: UNGOVERNED SPACEs
*Raza Ahmad Rumi*

- THE CONSTRUCTION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF PAKISTAN: THE INSTITUTIONAL WRIT OF THE STATE
*Zahid Hussain*

# THE TALIBAN

# PREAMBLE: THIRD PARTY ROLES AND INSURGENCIES IN SOUTH ASIA

## Moeed Yusuf

*Associate Vice President, USIP*

In 2014, I edited a book on counterinsurgency in South Asia (*Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in South Asia: Through a Peacebuilding Lens)*. In comparing India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, the analysis identified a number of common threads across the case studies. Arguably the most politically controversial of these is the role of third party spoilers in insurgencies. Insurgent support from external actors – usually near and far neighbors of the insurgency-infested state – has been the norm rather than the exception in South Asia.

The finding is extremely consequential but not altogether surprising. South Asia suffers from an unfinished process of state and nation building. National identities and territorial boundaries are deeply contested and the contestation involves neighbors who often feel justified in manipulating the situation in pursuit of their preferred configuration on these questions. Massive organized violence tin the forms of insurgencies often originate from domestic grievances linked to the contested issues and provide obvious opportunities for outside states to exploit them further. The normative concern about 'sovereignty' in statecraft is trampled in the process – it always has been in this region.

Both Daud and Semple have aptly captured the importance of this broader geo-politics for the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban insurgencies in their papers but without referring to this dynamic. The Afghan Taliban have benefited tremendously from the overlay of Machiavellian politics among regional and extra-regional actors with a direct stake in developments in the country. The U.S. (as an extension of the Afghan state given its central role in shaping the direction of post-9/11 Afghanistan) and Pakistan have been the most important actors. Their interests have never fully converged on the end state in Afghanistan. For the U.S., the ideal state in Afghanistan is a decisively defeated Taliban, an inclusive democratic political system friendly towards the West, and a strong security apparatus that can defeat and prevent the resurgence of any Islamist outfit. Since 9/11, this has translated into an expansive counterinsurgency effort, replacement of the Taliban with an ethnically diverse set up in Kabul, first under President Karzai and now Ghani, and a 350,000-plus strong Afghan security force.

Pakistan's approach to Afghanistan is a function of its rivalry with India. Throughout history, Pakistan and India have approached Afghanistan as a staging ground for their broader tussle for supremacy in South Asia history. For Pakistan, the post-9/11 developments in Afghanistan represented something far more worrying: The 350,000-plus force of stability for it was a new army that sees Pakistan as the principal long term rival; it internalized political diversity as an expansion of space and power for elements traditionally opposed to Pakistan, more wedded to border disputes with Pakistan, and closer to India; and it felt that the desire to fight to total victory in Afghanistan (or at least as it saw the U.S.'s campaign) was directly responsible for the militant backlash in Pakistan. The combination meant that Pakistan's security establishment (that controls the Afghan policy) saw itself as the net loser; to its mind, the U.S. approach was a problem more than a solution.

The fundamental problem in terms of the Afghan Taliban insurgency was that the success of the U.S.-led counterinsurgency effort was always implicitly predicated on its own efforts – both kinetic and non-kinetic – in Afghanistan *and* Pakistan's direct support in squeezing the space for the Taliban and its affiliates. And yet, given Pakistan's outlook, it was never clear how U.S. policies would change its calculus to its liking. The U.S. created multiple incentives but virtually all were linked to monetary rewards for Pakistan – and therefore irrelevant to the India question. At the same time, the U.S. was constrained in terms of raising Pakistani costs because of its dependence on Pakistan's supply route to Afghanistan and the risks of potentially destabilizing an already turbulent nuclear power. The Afghan state only complicated matters by exaggerating the 'Pakistan problem' to deflect attention from its colossal governance failures and subsequent challenges to legitimacy. Pakistan, on its part, articulated a vision for South Asia that demanded an even handed U.S. approach between India and Pakistan and strict curbs on India's role in Afghanistan. Neither was realistic given the U.S.'s interest in India's global rise and Kabul's inherent incentive to balance Pakistan's proximity with India's clout.

The U.S.-Pakistan-Afghanistan disconnect was therefore all but structurally embedded in South Asia's post-9/11 geo-politics. This was neither the driver of the insurgency nor, as Daud points out in his paper, would a turnaround in Pakistan's approach end it *per se,* but it did (and continues to) complicate matters significantly.

The regional aspect is also intrinsic to the case of the Pakistani Taliban. A multitude of factors led to the TTP's rise but what is clear is that sans the post-9/11 dynamics in Afghanistan, Pakistan would not have faced the FATA-based rebellion that eventually coalesced – helped significantly by the state's errors – into a full-fledged insurgency under the TTP banner. The rallying cry for anti-Pakistan militants was the Pakistani army's forays into FATA in support for the U.S. campaign. Of course, this is not an example of a third party spoiling role in that sense given that the U.S. never wanted this fallout to occur. However, in as much as Pakistan saw its presence as a contributing factor to its domestic insurgency, it further dampened the Pakistani security establishment's enthusiasm to oblige the U.S. on its asks against the Afghan Taliban. As the Pakistani insurgency took off, and the U.S. pointed to it to reinforce its view that Pakistan needed to deal with all militant elements decisively, Pakistan

felt that it was the fact that it did too much (not too little) to support the U.S. effort had led to this backlash in the first place. The wedge between the two widened further, to the Afghan Taliban's advantage.

More recently, the TTP has also benefited from the increasingly intense *realpolitick* game between Pakistan and the Afghan government. The TTP's operations from Afghanistan continue to prevent Pakistan from decimating the group, a fact that provides Afghanistan an important bargaining chip. As Semple suggests, this was one of the reasons some expected greater cooperation between the two sides. For now, the only impact of this dynamic has been to sour Afghanistan-Pakistan relations further. And there is little incentive for Afghanistan to change tack on this without getting something tangible in return from Pakistan.

## The Days Ahead

The experience of South Asian insurgencies shows that negative third party roles may eventually be altered in one of three ways: (i) counterinsurgency efforts demonstrate a decisive advantage, thereby prompting the third party to pull back; (ii) the insurgent turns on its third party patron for one reason or another; and (iii) the inter-state alignment changes such that the third party finds an incentive in changing its stance.

None of these are likely in Afghanistan's case. The recent change of heart in Washington about a swift troop drawdown is significant, in that it makes an outright defeat of the Afghan state highly unlikely. But the on-ground configuration does not seem to be poised to deliver a decisive victory either. In terms of the Taliban's relationship with Pakistan, the equation has always oscillated, but the costs of direct confrontation continue to be deemed prohibitive by both sides. Moreover, for the first time, Taliban have real alternative alignment options; countries like Iran and Russia are far more worried about the Islamic State presence in Afghanistan than the Taliban and have therefore reportedly begun to promote a far softer take on the Taliban. At the very least, this ought to make Pakistan even less likely to test the limits of its leverage over them. It also means that the impact of any decision on its part to go after the Taliban will be less consequential. And as long as these factors hold, the Af-Pak relationship will remain strained and competitive. This means Pakistan will be unable to get the concessions it wants from Afghanistan on TTP. If so, the insurgency will be saved the total decimation it faces if its leadership were still in Pakistan.

The Afghan and Pakistan Taliban insurgencies conform to the norm of third party roles complicating counterinsurgency efforts in South Asia. Conflicting state visions for the South Asian neighborhood and disregard for the normative concerns about sovereignty are blatantly evident. Also in keeping with the general trend of counterinsurgent behavior is Afghanistan and Pakistan's propensity to blame the other as the principal reason for their problems, while insisting that their own policies towards the other's insurgent outfits are peripheral. Neither is accurate. But none of this is about to change. Unfortunately, the status quo suggests more violence and more human suffering for the peoples of this region.

# THE PAKISTAN TALIBAN MOVEMENT: AN APPRAISAL

**Michael Semple**

*Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation
and Social Justice
Queen's University, Belfast*

In October 2014 the spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) announced his movement's backing for the "Islamic State" (IS) and its efforts to re-establish the Caliphate. The spokesman pledged that the Taliban would align their efforts with the Islamic State by sending fighters and military experts to the Middle East. In the wake of the statement, the TTP had to issue a clarification that their admiration for the actions of the Islamic State did not imply any intention to formally affiliate with it. This clarification was necessary to maintain the convenient fiction that the TTP are under the authority of the Afghan Taliban leader, Mullah Omar. Eventually the leadership had to go further and sack the spokesman.

The statement and the reactions to it epitomise the confusion surrounding the Pakistan Taliban Movement. Through this public positioning, the TTP essentially claimed that ideologically it had found common cause with the most dynamic *jihadi* movement in the Middle East; that practically it had links with the IS; and that militarily the Taliban were strong enough to make a difference to the IS. Thus, the spokesman sought to present the TTP as a significant player in a regional conflict with global dimensions. The first round of commentators were sceptical about these claims implied in the TTP statement. They essentially dismissed it as bombast by a local armed group, largely confined to Pakistan's remote tribal areas, which is simply using the media to exaggerate its importance. And yet, for a decade, the TTP and its antecedents have kept the world's eighth largest army occupied in a highly destructive but inconclusive conflict. In the light of the controversy over whether the TTP really matters, this paper reappraises the movement's aspirations, capabilities, linkages and significance.

## The History of the TTP

The history of the TTP is inextricably linked to the collapse of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan (IEA) and the subsequent organisation of the Islamist insurgency to counter the post-2001 government in Kabul. The formation of the Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan was announced in December 2007, when the commanders of a number of paramilitary

groups operating in the tribal areas and adjoining parts of the then-NWFP (subsequently renamed Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa) agreed to merge. The TTP is thus both a product of, and a key actor in, the post-2001 insurgency in Pakistan's tribal areas.

Although the leadership of Mullah Omar's Taliban Movement was exclusively Afghan, during the period 1994-2001, the movement welcomed volunteer fighters from Pakistani *madrassahs*. A significant number of these Pakistani Taliban volunteers were from the tribal areas, in particular members of the Mehsud and Wazir tribes from Waziristan. Three factors contributed to the role of the Pakistani tribal volunteers in the Afghan Taliban movement in the early years. In terms of historical precedents there was a long history of involvement of the border Pashtun tribes in conflict in Afghanistan. In terms of network linkages, many of the tribal youth were enrolled in Deobandi *madrassahs*. These actively identified with the Taliban and were able to facilitate the young men joining the Taliban, without them having to belong to any of the *jihadi* militant groups, which also channelled personnel to Taliban Afghanistan. Thirdly, Mawlvi Jalaluddin Haqqani, the senior-most former *mujahideen* commander to have joined the Taliban, had for twenty-five years been based in Miranshah, administrative centre of North Waziristan. As the Taliban Minister for Frontiers and Tribes, he provided the principal patron for Pakistani tribal fighters serving with the Afghan Taliban. However, the single largest movement of Pakistani Pashtun volunteers into Taliban-run Afghanistan occurred at the start of the US intervention in 2001. Sufi Mohammad, leader of the Tehreek Nifaz Shariat Mohammadi (TNSM) in the Malakand Division of NWFP, led a force of some 10,000 men pledged to defend against the US invasion. This foray proved disastrous for the TNSM as the force had no discernible impact on the conflict and the men ended up dead, captured or straggling back to Pakistan, where Sufi Mohammad was arrested.

With the collapse of the Taliban regime, the Pakistani volunteers returned to their homes and *madrassahs* in the tribal areas or NWFP. But the survivors of the Taliban's international brigades, including experienced fighters from across the Middle East, the Northern Caucasus and Uzbekistan, also sought shelter in the tribal areas. The lack of a Pakistani government writ outside of the administrative centres in FATA made the tribal areas a convenient haven for the bulk of the foreign fighters and their families, whom the Afghan Taliban had previously hosted in the run-up to 2001. While the bulk of the international brigade was accommodated in FATA, smaller numbers of leadership figures from Al Qaeda drew on the support of Pakistani Islamist organisations to arrange shelter in the urban and settled areas of Pakistan.

During the period 2002 to 2004 the Afghan Taliban reorganised in Pakistan so as to launch an insurgency. In broad terms, from the earliest days, the insurgency had one component based in the tribal areas and another based in the settled areas to which most Afghan Taliban and their leaders had relocated, most famously Quetta. A decade later, it is possible to discern the different tendencies in the Afghanistan insurgency, based upon where the instigators have been based. The Afghan Taliban leadership, operating from Quetta and other cities, developed a narrative for their insurgency that focused on fighting the western invaders and their stooges in Afghanistan. They legitimised

themselves by declaring their intention to re-establish the Islamic Emirate that had been overthrown by the US and they declared loyalty to the original Taliban movement and supreme leader Mullah Omar. The Afghan Taliban narrative made no reference to Pakistan and the leadership worked hard to ensure that its forces were only involved in fighting in Afghanistan and that their men avoided any activities in Pakistan which the authorities might deem hostile[1].

The remnants of the Taliban's foreign legion, including key figures from Al Qaida, were at the forefront of efforts to organise the insurgency from a base in the tribal areas. They mobilised tribal veterans returned from Afghanistan, newly armed tribal fighters and the foreign legion's own fighters, the largest contingents of whom were from Uzbekistan and the North Caucasus. The groups that organised in the tribal areas from the outset declared their intention both to expel the western invaders from Afghanistan and to oppose their allies, the Pakistan Army. Al Qaeda propagandists played a significant role in ensuring that the narrative of the new *jihad* included a virulent anti-Pakistan Army element. The tribal area based Al Qaeda agitators and the Pakistani tribal fighters whom they helped to mobilise, described themselves generically as *mujahideen* and initially avoided declaring an affiliation to any organisation other than Mullah Omar's Taliban. However, within the tribal areas, in the years 2002 to 2007 an array of armed groups emerged, generally constructed within particular tribes and their territories, and around "strong men" - commanders, dubbed "*ameers*" who emerged in the early stages of the insurgency.

The approach of the Government of Pakistan and its security forces to ruling FATA helped ensure that the area became the main locus of the TTP insurgency. FATA's special administrative status retained from the colonial period mandates a form of indirect rule, whereby local tribes, through government-recognised elders, are supposed to exercise collective responsibility over their territory. Government therefore only directly controlled administrative centres, main roads and security installations and deployed local paramilitaries rather than the regular security forces. Pakistan´s security doctrine has historically cultivated the idea of the tribes of FATA as constituting a reserve army available to complement actions of the regular army. The prime example of this was in October 1947, when the new Pakistani authorities encouraged tribal fighters to attack the Kashmir Valley. In the 1980's much of the support operation for the Afghan *mujahideen* was located in FATA and a significant unregulated arms manufacturing industry and arms trade have thrived there. As the pro-Taliban groups started to organise, they were able to roll back the limited government presence even further so that government officials were restricted to their cantonments and forts. After this, to secure a base of operations, the armed groups had only to neutralise or co-opt local tribes.

The Afghan Taliban in the settled areas of Baluchistan and NWFP avoided interfering in the administrative affairs of the areas where they were based. In contrast in the tribal areas, international and Pakistani fighters rapidly became involved in clashes with the Pakistani army and started to assert their authority over the settlements where they were based. From as early as 2004 it became clear that FATA, as well as acting as a rear base for the anti-government insurgency in Afghanistan, was

**1.** Anzalone, Christopher, "The TTP's hybrid insurgency", Foreign Policy November 2011 http://southasia. foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/23/the_ttps_hybrid_insurgency for contrast between the TTP and Afghan Taliban narrative

MICHAEL SEMPLE

the site of a nascent insurgency against the Pakistan authorities and a base for terrorism around Pakistan. Most symbolically, the FATA-based *mujahideen*, announced clamp downs on crime and meted out public punishments, including executions. General Pervez Musharraf, as part of his 2001 cooperation with the US intervention in Afghanistan, had deployed troops in parts of FATA. In 2004 in South Waziristan, the Pakistani army launched its first operation designed to retake territory from insurgents. This marked the start of a decade-long campaign in which the army has launched operations successively in all seven of the tribal areas, as well as Malakand Division. Before 2007 the *ameers* who led Pakistan Pashtun fighters in the tribal areas lacked an over-arching command or organisation. Many of the *ameers* had personal links to Al Qaeda figures, but few actually joined that organisation. Despite the lack of an over-arching organisation, in FATA and particularly Waziristan, the range of fighters and groups involved in the new *jihad* in Afghanistan coalesced as an informal Islamic movement, with shared norms and a degree of cooperation.

There was a significant escalation of violence in Pakistan in 2007, in the wake of the army operation against the Lal Masjid in Islamabad. This saw tribal area-based fighters launching attacks against army and government targets[2]. For the first time, the scale of violence in Pakistan approached that in Afghanistan and this violence was no longer a minor spill-over from Afghanistan but rather, an insurgency in its own right. In December 2007, in response to the challenges posed by the spreading insurgency, the tribal area and NWFP *ameers* met and formed an umbrella organisation, the TTP. Although the *ameers* asserted that they were loyal to the Afghan Taliban supreme commander, the announcement of the TTP was a declaration that the *ameers* were no longer simply an appendage of the Afghan insurgency. It gave them a vehicle to pursue and articulate aims that diverged from those of the Afghan Taliban. In the TTP, the *ameers* had a vehicle to challenge the Pakistani state, while professing loyalty to Mullah Omar, whose own forces were obliged to avoid antagonising the same state.

The history of the TTP after 2007 has consisted of a series of insurrections and army operations, interspersed with non-aggression protocols. In the east, the TTP's Faqeer Mohammad took over much of Bajaur Agency and Ahmad Wali took over much of Mohmand, prompting army operations to disburse them. Most famously, activists of the old TNSM, who went on to become the Swat chapter of the TTP, staged an insurrection in the Malakand Division, which eventually provoked an army operation in 2009.

Swat-Malakand has a long history of hosting Islamist-inspired insurgencies, as supporters of Syed Ahmad Barehlvi established *mujahideen* bases there during his 1826-1831 *jihad* against Ranjit Singh and Mullah Sadaullah Bunerwal launched *jihad* against the British in 1897. More recently, Sufi Mohammad and the TNSM had staged a revolt against the government in 1994. For the TNSM the TTP-supported rising was simply the latest stage in long campaign. The Pakistan army also made the link between Swat and the FATA insurgency and so after pushing the TNSM and Taliban back from Swat launched an operation in South Waziristan against the strongest of the TTP component groups, the Mehsud fighters then led by Baitullah

2. Terrorism fatalities doubled between 2006 (1471) when there were 7 suicide attacks and 2007 (3598) when there were 54 suicide attacks. Both fatalities and suicide attacks peaked in 2009 with the Swat and SWA operations. Compiled by South Asia Terrorism Portal http://www.satp.org/

Mehsud. After much delay, in June 2014 the Pakistan army launched its operation against North Waziristan, which had become the most important safe haven available to the TTP and associated international *mujahideen*. This operation, which explicitly targeted the TTP, altered the geography of the movement's by denying it access to the urban centres of Mir Ali and Miranshah. More broadly, the bulk of TTP fighters have been concentrated in the strip along the Pakistan Afghanistan border comprising FATA and Malakand Division. However during the period 2008-2014 TTP *ameers* also developed networks of fighters and collaborators in settled areas including the leading urban centres of the country, such as Karachi. The TTP presence in these areas was clandestine, in contrast to its open operations in FATA. The infiltration of the urban centres both allowed the TTP to stage high profile terrorist attacks on targets in Pakistan's cities, and to become involved in armed crime across Pakistan. Ultimately it was the TTP's activities outside the tribal areas – its summer 2014 attack on Karachi airport – which prompted the Pakistan Army to launch the Zarb e Azb operation against the TTP.

## TTP Aspirations & Narrative

In their propaganda material, interviews and statements, the TTP have aligned themselves with the Al Qaida critique of the Pakistan state. They have also highlighted the alleged pro-western foreign and security policies of the Government of Pakistan, claiming that consistently government and army have acted contrary to the interests of the Muslim *ummah* and its *mujahideen*. One of the most potent examples of a TTP leader articulating this Islamist critique of the Pakistan state was the speech made by Hakeemullah Mehsud at the summary execution of Pakistani Special Forces veteran Colonel Imam. Hakeemullah claimed that the Pakistani state has consistently served US interests. He claimed that Pakistan's support for the Afghan *mujahideen* during the 1980's was driven by its identification with the Americans and not out of sympathy with the *mujahideen* cause[3]. Thus, General Musharraf's alignment with the US coalition against the Taliban after 2001 represented the Pakistani state's true strategic position.

Leaders and spokesmen of TTP publicly identify two broad aims. The movement firstly seeks to end foreign occupation of Afghanistan, to which end it acts in support of the Afghan Taliban Movement. Secondly it seeks to establish a *sharia´a*-based state in Pakistan. Before the formal establishment of TTP, Al Qaida figures operating in Pakistan developed an Islamist narrative challenging the Pakistani state. This narrative acts as a counterpart to the narratives of resistance in Afghanistan. The AQ narrative for Pakistan asserts that the Pakistani state is a hangover from colonialism and is therefore inherently un-Islamic. According to this narrative, by clinging to a colonial era legal system and western-style constitution, the Pakistani state is a bulwark for western influence in the Muslim world. The Pakistan army epitomises the colonial character of the Pakistani state. The current Pakistani army is essentially the same one that opposed Muslim interests throughout the colonial period, for example by suppressing the *mujahideen* movement led by Syed Ahmad in 1831, by putting down the Indian mutiny in 1857, and by overthrowing the Ottoman Caliphate and "*handing over Jerusalem and*

**3**   Speech by Hakeemullah included in the video of the execution of Col. Imam, circulated in Miranshah and Peshawar

*its Al Aqsa Mosque to the Jews*" during the first world war. Al Qaida's anti-army narrative accuses the army of systematic cruelty against the civilian population, from the 1971 war in Bangladesh to the treatment of Islamist suspects today. They argue that the only language the army understands is force and thus call on Islamists to support the *mujahideen* in resisting the Pakistan army[4].

The TTP has never taken the trouble to elaborate its vision for a *shari'a*-based Pakistan. In this sense, it even lags behind the Afghan Taliban, who at least have a legacy of publications and Islamising legislation from their period in power. Multiple TTP statements have, however, made explicit their rejection of general elections as an un-Islamic import. Beyond their aspiration that Afghanistan and Pakistan be free of American influence and ruled by *shari'a*-based political systems, the TTP has projected itself as an organisation which champions the interests of "the *mujahideen*". In this sense, members of the TTP identify themselves as belonging to and acting in solidarity with a broader movement of militant Islamists. This informed the Hakeemullah critique of the Pakistani state – cooperation with the US in counter-terrorism amounted to treachery against the mujahideen.

Despite the low level of institutionalisation of the TTP, the basic aspirations and narrative seem to be common across the movement. Since the TTP's formation, the movement has maintained a leadership council, consisting of the commanders of component groups and main area-based commanders, plus a single supreme commander (*ameer*). The *ameer* and the movement's spokesmen have been able to articulate the two aims and their critique of the Pakistan state, on behalf of the movement as a whole.

In interpreting the TTP's aspirations, it is important to contrast the far-reaching demands ("scrap the Pakistan Constitution") with its geographically marginal base of support in the country. Each of the component armed groups within the movement has recruited fighters from its core area. Taken as a whole, the movement thus has some membership from each of the seven tribal areas and Malakand Division, with a smaller number of fighters coming from the Peshawar Valley and other settled areas of KP. During area-specific insurrections, such as the Taliban takeover of Swat, they clearly manipulated local agrarian grievances and tried to expand their recruitment among marginalised parts of the population. But the movement has not undertaken any sustained popular mobilisation. Even within areas where the TTP's armed groups have some presence, a minority of the population has actively sided with the movement. But the TTP presence outside its core areas of Pakistan's north is basically confined to migrant networks, tribal Pashtuns settled in Karachi and other major cities.

In terms of linkages with the broader Islamic movement, the TTP has not tried to build links with the constitutional parties, such as JUI[5]. Instead it has some operational cooperation with other militant groups, such as Lashkar Jhangvi and Jaish Mohammad. TTP has neither the military nor political clout, at a Pakistan level, to entertain any realistic prospect of effecting political change. Furthermore the TTP's base of support and locus of activities have remained relatively constant over its seven years of existence. This base of support is limited to a marginal element

4. Articulated for example in Al Sahab studio propaganda video "Who will You Support?", circulated in Miranshah and Peshawar.
5. In November 2014 a TTP offshoot, Jundullah, targeted the JUI chief in a suicide attack.

within the population, basically pro-*jihadi* rural-dwelling Pashtuns. The movement has not been able to operate openly in urban areas outside FATA or to attract significant levels of support within state institutions. There is no evidence that the movement is on a trajectory towards building core political influence or that it has a revolutionary strategy to grab power. Instead it remains a classic terrorist group that, through acts of violence and propaganda, periodically manages to insert issues onto the national political agenda and to limit the options available to constitutional actors. The most direct examples of TTP or its components achieving some effect at the level of national politics are the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and the targeting of the secular-nationalist Awami National Party in the 2013 general elections. Being largely confined to mobilising marginal groups in remote areas and lacking a revolutionary strategy, the TTP does not have any realistic capability to capture the Pakistani state, or indeed grab its nuclear arsenal. The TTP has neither the capability to achieve its stated aim of replacing the Pakistan Constitution with a *shari´a* system nor does it have a strategy to acquire that capability. However, without an overhaul of Pakistan's approach to counter-terrorism and proxy warfare, the TTP will be likely to sustain terrorist violence across Pakistan and ensure that the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier area remains a hub for regional terrorism.

The TTP could more credibly aspire to dictate change in the core areas where it has mobilised. Its component groups have engaged in short-lived campaigns of Islamisation in areas which they have taken over. In the initial stages of the TTP takeover of Bajaur, the movement established what it described as shariat courts. During the 2008 and 2009 TNSM and TTP takeover of much of  Malakand Division, the movement's fighters claimed that they were combating moral corruption, initially clamping down on suspected drug addicts and subsequently enforcing a quasi-moral code, by closing schools and restricting women's mobility. However, the TTP was not able to sustain these initiatives in either Bajaur or Swat. In different parts of FATA, while TTP or its component parts have held sway, they have been engaged in highly symbolic acts of vigilantism, such as the public execution of local criminals. But these have not amounted to a credible programme of Islamisation. Instead they have focused on developing and protecting their armed forces and empowering TTP affiliated commanders and, to a lesser extent, associated *ulema*. Their actions in places where the TTP have achieved control show little evidence of serious commitment to achieving social change. At the national scale, the TTP is incapable of enforcing a *shari´a*-based system and at the local level, where it might have been able to, the TTP has apparently been uninterested in enforcing *shari´a*.

Beyond its stated religious motivation, the TTP has never declared itself a Pashtun movement or even championed specifically Pashtun causes. Furthermore, it has directly targeted the Pashtun secular nationalists of the Awami National Party. However the movement's *ameers* and their followers have been predominantly Pashtun and each component group is rooted in a particular Pashtun tribe. Thus, while deploying an Islamist ideology with no reference to tribal identity, the TTP has drawn upon Pashtun cultural institutions and follows a Pashtun tradition of sporadic rebellions by charismatic mullahs and brigands. The TTP does not represent Pashtun tribal society but rather mobilises lumpen elements within it.

## TTP Activities & Methods

If the publicly stated aims of the movement do not give a credible explanation of the raison d'être of the TTP, an alternative perspective is available from examining the movement's activities and methods. The TTP came to prominence as a movement that fights against the Pakistani army. The TTP and its predecessors have now been engaged in a decade long campaign of fighting against the army in the tribal areas. It has been a classic guerilla campaign in the sense that the TTP fighters have specialised in rocketing and mine warfare combined with occasional raids on isolated outposts. TTP fighters have periodically managed to concentrate their fighters and over-run significant army and government positions, such as their first major operation in January 2008, when they overran the fort at Sra Rogha in South Waziristan. They have extended their tactic of the large-scale raid to target settled areas adjoining the tribal area, most famously in the attacks against the prisons in Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu. The TTP has been the premier group in Pakistan to pioneer suicide bombing and has at times maintained a tempo in suicide operations comparable to that of the campaign in Afghanistan. The group has conducted multiple assassinations, particularly directed against tribal figures considered hostile to it and Pashtun secular nationalist politicians, considered to be opposed to Islamist militancy.

In addition to the TTP violence against figures associated with the state, its fighters have periodically engaged in sectarian violence, targeting Shi´a civilians. Beyond the ostensibly political and sectarian violence, TTP fighters have been involved in armed criminal activities. The activity with which they are most associated is kidnapping. The TTP uses its combination of a covert armed presence in the cities with safe havens in the tribal areas to conduct kidnappings on an industrial scale. Kidnapping has become both an important source of revenue for commanders in the movement and a preoccupation for their personnel. This kidnapping business encapsulates a criminalised social rebellion element of the TTP programme. By kidnapping members of the Pashtun elite, the lumpen elements of the tribal area project themselves into a position of power over that elite. Seeking to ransom out the succession of hostages, the Pashtun elite are obliged to petition and ultimately pay off those whom they would previously have considered their social inferiors.

## Proxy Warfare & Blow-Back

The TTP has emerged in a context with a long history of proxy warfare, where state actors patronise   armed groups with resources and protection from the security forces, in return for accepting state guidance on their targeting or other activities. Most serious analysts would accept that FATA has long been a prime locus for proxy warfare activities. However there is no transparency over the proxy relationships – who supports whom. On the contrary, most of what is written with greatest confidence about which government agencies are supporting which armed groups is unsubstantiated and much of it is implausible or wrong. Nevertheless some broad observations are possible.

The TTP has successfully exploited the support and protection that the Afghan Taliban and particular the Haqqani Network have enjoyed in Pakistan since the start of the current Afghan insurgency. Whether through centrally direction or local initiative, security forces along the frontier have typically been indulgent of armed Pashtuns claiming to be engaged in *jihad* in Afghanistan. This in itself has helped TTP fighters circulate under arms. However, the Mehsuds, one of the core groups of fighters who helped form the TTP, clashed with the Pakistani army in the earliest operations in FATA and thereafter launched a campaign of harassment which briefly succeeded in almost excluding the army from the Mehsud areas. From 2009 the army decided to treat the Mehsuds as a priority target and it went on to launch a clearance campaign in South Waziristan Agency. However the Mehsud fighters shifted their base to Miranshah of Northern Waziristan which had been established as headquarters for the Haqqani Network, the principal beneficiary of Pakistani state patronage. North Waziristan by mid 2014 had become one of the main concentrations of support activities for the insurgency in Afghanistan. Although the Mehsuds made at most a minor contribution to military activities in Afghanistan, they took advantage of the insurgent safe haven which the Pakistan authorities tolerated until mid 2014.

International portrayals of Afghanistan-Pakistan proxy warfare have focused on concerns about how state backing allows the Taliban to sustain their operations. However another aspect of the proxy relations is that the beneficiaries of state patronage are to some extent subject to the state actors' discipline, imposed through conditionalities. For example, the Afghan Taliban value their access to a safe haven in Pakistan and, it is their strategic commitment to maintaining this explains why they have been at pains to refrain from activities within Pakistan which the security agencies could object to. Another example is that within Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban movement has largely refrained from involvement in armed crime. The TTP, by contrast, have long known that the state in any case considers them to be public enemy number one. They have therefore exercised no restraint in their involvement in armed crime.

The TTP's direct involvement in proxy warfare has been through the relationship that some commanders of the movement developed with the Afghan authorities from 2010 onwards. This development was initially propelled by the success of Pakistan army operations in clearing TTP commanders from much of Malakand Division and Bajaur and Mohmand agencies. The TTP's Bajaur and Mohmand commanders shifted into eastern Afghanistan and established themselves there. Over time, they have mounted sporadic cross-border raids against Pakistani forces and have developed links with the local authorities in Afghanistan. By the time of the 2014 North Waziristan, the relatively open presence of TTP groups in eastern Afghanistan had become a significant cause for concern for the Pakistan authorities who expected to be targeted by them.

One of the immediate effects of the Waziristan operation was a flow of civilian refugees from North Waziristan into Afghanistan's Khost and Paktika provinces. TTP fighters followed the refugees and have clearly been tolerated by the Afghan authorities. Although there is no published evidence of the displaced TTP fighters gaining access to the kind of infrastructure which either they or the Haqqanis enjoyed in Mir

Ali and Miranshah, they have gained the ability to access and transit Afghan territory along the frontier from Chitral in the east to South Waziristan in the west. The TTP entrenchment in Afghanistan altered the geography of proxy war and exposed Pakistan to the threat of a terrorist movement with a secure rear base.

## The TTP & International Linkages

Since its earliest stages the TTP has been closely associated with Waziristan-based international Islamist militants. These international linkages have resulted in key figures in the TTP such as its deceased *Ameer*, Hakeemullah, being listed as international terrorists. Both leaders of core Al Qaeda and associated groups such as the IMU, have recognised the TTP as *ansar*, or local protectors. The TTP's role as protectors has entailed dealing with the local population on behalf of the foreign militants. The process has been mutually legitimising. The foreign militants have gained local clout and penetration and TTP has reinforced its Islamist credentials by demonstrating an association with the world's premier *jihadist* organisation. The long history of TTP's association with the foreign militants in Waziristan should not be taken as proof in itself of TTP developing a global vision or committing to international terrorism. Periodically and publicly, TTP figures have deliberately associated themselves with attempted international terrorist attacks. However they have not embarked upon this systematically or in a sustained way. Therefore the appearance of TTP *Ameer* Hakeemullah in a video of the Al Qaeda attack on Camp Chapman in Afghanistan should be taken as an example of him seeking to legitimise himself in the constituency of *mujahideen.*

## Appeasement of the TTP

Although the TTP has been the target of sustained and large scale military operations in the tribal areas and multiple counter-terrorist raids in the settled areas, the movement has also benefited from an element of appeasement in its dealings with the state and political actors.

The most prominent examples of appeasement have been the peace deals signed by the army and the political authorities in FATA and Swat[6]. The successive protocols in effect conceded control of the territories in which they applied to the *mujahideen* of those areas, as they provided for the interruption of security forces operations, granted concessions such as freeing of prisoners and cash payments and yet provided no credible enforcement mechanisms for good behaviour commitments given by the *mujahidee*n or the local population on their behalf. Although the peace agreements contained provisions referring to expulsion of foreign militants and the obligation of *mujahideen* to refrain from mounting attacks across the frontier, the lack of any enforcement means that the peace agreements seem to have had precisely the opposite purpose – they appeased the tribal area *mujahideen* in the hope that they would focus on *jihad* in Afghanistan and refrain from attacks within Pakistan. The problem for security forces in Pakistan has thus been that for the TTP, the *jihad* in Afghanistan is just one of its aims, and the movement has not been

6. For a useful summary see Daud Khattak, "Reviewing Pakistan's peace deals with the Taliban", November 2012, blog down-loaded from http://isnblog.ethz.ch/isn-security-watch/reviewing-pakis-tans-peace-deals-with-the-taliban#.UJJlmdQNl2A.twitter

prepared to desist from the *jihad* in Pakistan.

The peak of Pakistan appeasement of the TTP came in the early 2014 attempted talks process with the movement. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif lent his personal authority to this process. The TTP proposed, and the government accepted, an elaborate framework for the process, with the TTP nominating a panel of senior Islamist figures to talk on its behalf, while the government nominated its own committee of interlocutors. The high level engagement implied a government acceptance that the Taliban had legitimate political grievances or demands. However, the TTP made extravagant demands, such as release of prisoners held by the government and halting of security operations, while failing to engage on any serous political issue. The ostensible cause of the break down in government-TTP talks was the TTP attack on Karachi airport on 8 June 2014. This high profile attack was widely interpreted as indicating a lack of seriousness on the part of the TTP in pursuing an accommodation. The Pakistan military, under a new Chief of Army Staff, was in any case prepared for an operation in North Waziristan, which was a logical continuation of the series of operations which the military had conducted across FATA over a six year period. The talks had been the last factor delaying this operation and the TTP simply failed to offer even minimal concessions which might have strengthened the hand of those in government who believed that there was a prospect for a negotiated end to the insurgency.

On a more rhetorical level, the attitude of appeasement was displayed in the reaction from Pakistani political figures to the killing in a US drone attack of TTP leader Hakeemullah Mehsud. Leading political figures including the head of the Jamiat Islami party published eulogies of the dead commander, portraying him as a heroic victim of resistance to the US. The willingness of mainstream political figures in Pakistan to indulge a violent extremist organisation such as the TTP has been attributed to the prevailing confusion in Pakistani politics. A populist anti-American discourse prompts politicians to identify with anyone invoking the cause of *jihad* against America. Those who have internalised this discourse of anti-Americanism have been reluctant to accept that anyone else could proclaim *jihad* against them. Therefore there seems to have been a consistent under-estimation of the extent to which the TTP is prepared to target the state. An element of ambivalence is even built into the campaign of military operations against the TTP. Although the army has committed massive military resources to defeating the TTP, in each operation, the TTP leaders have succeeded in escaping and relocating to sustain their campaign from a new headquarters.

## The *raison d'être* of the TTP - Solidarity of the *Mujahideen*

One of the unifying themes explaining TTP actions is that the movement acts to protect the interests of a corps of *mujahideen*. The TTP itself is an amalgam of groups of fighters who consider themselves to be *mujahideen*, with each group rooted to a particular place or tribe. But the TTP is defined by its solidarity with the amorphous wider community of *mujahideen*. The most concrete way in which the TTP have operationalised their notion of solidarity has been through

MICHAEL SEMPLE

adopting the role of *ansar* for some of the Waziristan based foreign militants - facilitating and protecting foreign *mujahideen* located in territories where the TTP have influence. But the TTP relationship to foreign *mujahideen* has gone beyond local facilitation, in that its partisans have been actively involved in Waziristan-based conspiracies to conduct terrorist attacks internationally. Although such actions have earned for the TTP *ameers* international terrorist listings and made them a focus for drone attacks, they do not indicate that members of TTP have a developed global vision on a par with the leaders of Al Qaeda. An alternative explanation of TTP figures see this kind of operational cooperation as another form of solidarity – an opportunity for the tribal fighters involved to strengthen their credentials as *mujahideen*, by association with high prestige members of the community of *mujahideen*. TTP *ameers'* notion of this community potentially spans all Islamist groups which have confronted the United States since 2001.

The controversies over loyalty to Al Qaeda versus admiration for the Islamic State (IS) illustrate how the TTP's idea of solidarity goes beyond formal bonds of organisational loyalty. For those in the TTP, the notion of who is or is not a *mujahid*, or who is worthy of emulation or solidarity, does not rest alone on organisational affiliation. The factors include a certain critical level of piety or Muslim credentials. *Mujahideen* should at least refrain from public displays of un-Islamic behaviour, such as licentiousness and should profess that they are serving Islam. They should be warriors and charismatic commanders and those who have conducted feats on the battlefield more easily win recognition as *mujahideen*. And they should be loyal to fellow *mujahideen*, hostile to common enemies such as the US and should be free of links to hostile intelligence agencies or other enemies of the *mujahideen*. The idea of solidarity of the *mujahideen* indicates the dilemmas the TTP have faced in relating to fighters of the Haqqani Network, with whom they were co-located in North Waziristan, prior to the army operation there. The Haqqanis' reputation for having a close relationship with the Pakistani intelligence service indicated that the TTP should have kept their distance. But the practical benefits which the Haqqanis drew from the proxy relationship potentially rendered them useful to the TTP.

The TTP's commitment simply to protecting the interests of the *mujahideen* also provides part of the explanation for the relationship between the movement and crime. The TTP is significantly more criminalised than its Afghan counterpart and has taken no measures to limit its members' involvement in crime, in contrast to the Afghan Taliban. The movement is self-serving. The proceeds of crime are required to sustain the *mujahideen* and that in itself is justification enough for the kidnapping or extortion which it is engaged in. Because the TTP lacks any credible aspiration to establish an Islamic system, which would require some form of regulation of criminal activity, the TTP has been free to consider all activities which generate funds for the *mujahideen* as legitimate.

## The TTP Splits of 2014

During 2014 the TTP experienced at least six significant splits. These threw some light on the nature of the organisation and the contrast

with the Afghan Taliban movement, which has avoided major splits in twenty years of operation. In the first place in spring 2014 supporters of rival Mehsud commanders, Sheryar and Sajna clashed over who would take over as leader of the Mehsud faction in the wake of the assassination of Hakeemullah. In May, in the run up to the army launch of an operation against the TTP, Sajna announced he was disassociating himself from the movement because of its involvement in un-*shari'a* activities such as kidnapping. Sajna avoided being targeted operation but soon returned to manoeuvring for control of the Mehsud faction inside the TTP, a position in which he continued to benefit from their kidnapping business. After the launch of the North Waziristan operation, TTP-aligned commanders from the local Daur and Wazir tribes, such as Hafiz Gul Bahadur, who had a history of protocols with the army, refrained from resisting the operation and thus effectively delinked from the TTP. In August TTP's main commander from Mohmand Agency, Abdul Wali alias Omar Khorasani, announced that he and associates were breaking away to form a separate group Jamaat ul Ahrar. In September Ismatullah Muawiya on behalf of the "Punjabi Taliban", said they were exiting TTP, and planned to wage violent *jihad* only against the Afghan government, while restricting their Pakistani activities to peaceful preaching of Islam. Then in October, in the wake of the Sheikh Maqbool, alias Shahidullah Shahid´s announcement of allegiance to the IS, the TTP central leadership that they had expelled Shahid and his associates.

By late 2014 the TTP had thus morphed into three main groupings. The TTP *ameer*, Fazlullah of Swat, led the rump of the TTP's *shura* and its component armed groups in a continuing insurgency against Pakistan. Omar Khorasani and Jamaat ul Ahrar also remained committed to the anti-Pakistan insurgency, but free from Fazlullah's leadership. Those TTP commanders more content to heed guidance from the Pakistan authorities had suspended involvement in the Pakistan insurgency but remained armed and available for jihad across the border. In the first place it was state security actions which drove the splits in the TTP. The US assassination of the charismatic Hakeemullah precipitated an enduring succession crisis. The Pakistan army's success in securing Mir Ali and Miranshah denied the TTP and its associates to an urban-based headquarters. The realignments of some of the TTP commanders were consistent with the traditions of proxy relationships and the effective military operation seems to have enhanced state leverage over at least some of the TTP.

The splitting of the TTP into multiple armed groups which sought to retain an involvement in armed *jihad* through a range of different strategies can also be explained as an expression of tendencies inherent within the TTP itself. In the absence of the kind of centralising corporate culture which the Afghan Taliban had developed, commanders splitting from the movement faced no serious penalty. The movement lacked access to centrally controlled revenues, which might have enabled a leader to keep the groups together. The absence of a well-connected headquarters in Waziristan weakened the TTP leadership's control of criminal activity in Karachi. Instead, the strategic units within the TTP were the area-based *ameers* and their armed groups. Aligning with the central leadership under the TTP banner was only one of several possible strategies available to the *ameers*. The 2014 splits left weakened TTP

as a national organisation without a single major commander or group actually distancing himself from armed *jihad*.

## Implications for Threat Assessment & Responses

The narrative which the TTP has adopted, rhetorically committing it to the overthrow of the Pakistani state and opposition to any western involvement in the region, obliges the TTP to sustain continued terrorist violence in Pakistan as long as the movement survives.

There is no evidence that the TTP has any potential to transform itself into a political organisation or indeed to seek any form of peaceful role. Involvement in violence is central to the notion of solidarity with the *mujahideen* that the TTP has developed. Any political action related to the TTP insurgency should focus on addressing grievances or improving governance in areas where the TTP operates, so as to undermine its ability to recruit or tap local support. A political settlement with the TTP itself, as ostensibly informed the 2014 talks initiated by the government of Pakistan, seems unattainable. However such efforts to address the needs of the population in TTP-affected areas could usefully be supplemented by reintegration packages for combatants who detach themselves from the movement.

Although the TTP lacks the potential to overthrow the Pakistani state, it is likely to continue as a significant terrorist threat within Pakistan and the region. The TTP values its relationship with both core Al Qaeda and the multiplicity of international Islamist militant groups operating in the areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan where it has a presence. Although the TTP *ameers* lack the coherent vision of an Islamic Caliphate which might drive attempts to launch military action across South or Central Asia, the TTP is prepared to cooperate with groups that launch terror attacks from a base in the TTP's core area.

The most immediate regional dimension of the threat posed by TTP regards its expanding presence in Afghanistan. The TTP has proved adept at exploiting links with border tribes, sympathetic Afghan fighters and elements in the Afghan administration, to open up an operating base in Afghanistan. The TTP leadership is ready to embrace a proxy relationship whereby it focuses on conducting offensive operations in Pakistan in return for a haven in Afghanistan. Although the TTP is massively out-gunned by the Pakistan army, by developing its capacity to operate against Pakistan from the Afghan side of the frontier, the TTP has altered the strategic calculus between Afghanistan and Pakistan. This means that any meaningful move towards reconciliation in Afghanistan will need to include not just engagement between the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban to address grievances and political inclusion. This main track will have to be accompanied by an Afghanistan-Pakistan track aimed at persuading both sides to rein in their proxies -  i.e., to secure Afghanistan's cooperation in winding down the TTP, while Pakistan exerts positive leverage on the Afghan Taliban.

## Conclusions

The TTP is a classic example of a militant organisation driven by aspirations which it is incapable of achieving, but which has adapted itself to sustain a long-term conflict nonetheless. Compared to the Afghan Taliban, the TTP is under-developed as an organisation and has never tried to elaborate the kind of parallel state structures which have been fundamental to the Afghan Taliban approach. But the TTP does have an important set of linkages in the global Islamist Movement and has been recognised by Al Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan as a local host and partner for their operations in Pakistan. In this sense, the disputed TTP declaration of support for the IS is indeed significant. The TTP developed in response not to the presence of US troops in Afghanistan but to the presence of international *jihadists* in Pakistan's FATA. It has a decade of experience of symbiosis with Al Qaeda, the IMU and the Afghan Taliban. To the TTP, the emergence of IS simply marks another stage in the development of the international *jihadi* movement and it expects to find mutual advantage in extending the symbiotic relationship to this new movement.

Another of the factors which has rendered the TTP a disruptive influence is that has been unconstrained by proxy relationships with states in the region. In this, the TTP contrasts starkly with the Afghan Taliban Movement, which, to maintain its access to a safe haven within Pakistan has been obliged in its campaign to take Pakistan national security considerations into account. There is little sign of the TTP being subject to any intrusive quid pro quos in return for its ability to operate on Afghan soil. The TTP is thus dangerously autonomous and in planning its campaign of violence is only constrained by its ability to raise resources and evade security measures. The principle conflict to which the TTP has committed itself is that against the Pakistan Army, within the territory of Pakistan. But the TTP is open to association with the broader Islamist *jihadi* movement in FATA and has indicated its willingness to act as an ancillary to other organisations from that movement in extending operations beyond Pakistan.

The survival of the TTP as a fighting and propagandising force, despite the decade of military operations, illustrates the systemic incoherence of counter-terrorism in Pakistan. The TTP has benefited from the Pakistan establishment's commitment to proxy warfare and yet itself is unencumbered by any proxy relationship. Its successful articulation of Islamist causes has helped sustain a state of confusion among civilian politicians, which long persuaded them to cling to the hope that the TTP could be mollified with talks about grievances. And its fighters have repeatedly demonstrated an ability to evade or overwhelm government or military security measures or military operations. The emergence and survival of the TTP should thus be considered an outcome of the politics of *jihadist* groups in Pakistan and the region. It is not directly the creation of any state patron, whether friend or foe of Pakistan. Rather, it has opportunistically exploited regional state actors' propensity to engage in proxy warfare.

MICHAEL SEMPLE

## Afterword

The period summer 2014 to spring 2016 saw a transformation in the situation of the TTP, consolidating trends identified in the first edition of this paper. The organisation became a less potent direct threat to Pakistan's security. Despite the TTP continuing its armed campaign, it killed far fewer people in Pakistan in the period after summer 2014 than in the years before. Reported terrorism related fatalities in Pakistan fell to 3682 in 2015, down from a peak of 11,704 in 2009 (SATP). But meanwhile, the organisation became even more of an irritant in regional security, complicating the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The key factor driving the transformation of the TTP was the Pakistan military operation Zarb Azb, designed to reassert control of the North Waziristan tribal territory. The first phase of the operation in 2014 saw the army quickly reassert control of the urban areas of Miranshah and Mirali. However during 2015, TTP alongside the range of international and regional jihadi groups were still able to operate in the hilly border tract of North Waziristan's Shawal Valley. In spring 2016 the Pakistan army entered this remaining jihadi enclave in force pushing the jihadis along the frontier and into Afghanistan.

Although TTP continued skirmishing with the Pakistan army during 2015, the loss of bases and access to urban infrastructure in Waziristan significantly reduced the TTP's ability to mount terrorist attacks in Pakistan. But, as the old TTP ameers established themselves in Afghan border provinces, including Zabul, Paktika, Khost, Logar, Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan, they built up their armed groups again, reorganised supply routes and funding sources and resumed their attacks in Pakistan, at a significantly reduced scale.

The fact that the post 2014 TTP campaign depended heavily upon their exploiting Afghan territory cemented the issue of the TTP as a factor in Afghan-Pakistan relations. The most extreme manifestation of this came in episodes of cross-border shelling. The Pakistan army periodically shelled across the border, claiming to hit TTP targets and provoking protests from Kabul. But in a more nuanced way, the need to manage the hostile TTP presence in Afghanistan became a factor in the calculus of Pakistani security agencies charged with maintaining relations with other militant organisations. Afghanistan-based TTP commanders' attempts to launch attacks in Pakistan drove Pakistan security perceptions in two important ways. In the first place it provided an obvious criterion for identifying "good terrorists". Militants who pledged to oppose TTP could hope to be tolerated by Pakistan. In the second place, the presence of TTP in Afghanistan fuelled suspicion within Pakistan that anti-Pakistan militants received covert support from the Afghan state and India.

The TTP & Pakistan's Security Dilemma

The Pakistan state's response to the transformation of TTP from being primarily Pakistan-based to being primarily Afghanistan-based has emerged as a key factor in relations within the region. During the winter 2015-2016, the governments of US, China, Pakistan and India participated in a quadrilateral talks process aiming to trigger peace negotiations with the Afghan Taliban. At the outset there was optimism that Pakistan would use its influence on the Afghan Taliban, in part because the Afghan government could hold out the prospect of action against the TTP, a rationale identified in the original edition of this paper. But in April 2016 the Afghan Taliban went ahead with declaring another annual offensive, and in effect signified that the quadrilateral process had generated no movement towards talks. This development suggested that Pakistan and Afghanistan had lapsed into the lose-lose, no-cooperation outcome of "prisoner's dilemma". Instead of cooperating to promote peace and security, the neighouring states ended up willy-nilly hosting terrorist groups hostile to their neighbours. The conclusion of the original paper remains valid – that the TTP thrives by opportunistically exploiting regional state actors' propensity to engage in proxy warfare.

TTP Fragmentation & the Rise of Da´esh

The displacement of the TTP from Miranshah in 2014 also reinforced the process of fragmentation which was already underway within the movement. The TTP never recovered the degree of cohesiveness which it had displayed under its charismatic leader Hakeemullah Mahsud. The old ameers of the TTP reverted to a decentralised organisational model according to which armed groups in enclaves along the frontier conducted autonomous jihadi politics and with each commander deciding which of the  larger formations to ally himself to in return for patronage. Some of them opted to retain the old links to Al Qaeda and the Afghan Haqani Network. A group of veterans under former Hakeemullah aide, Hafiz Saeed Orakzai, formed the nucleus of the Afghanistan-Pakistan branch of Daesh. As noted in the original paper, the commanders of the TTP seemed intent on maintaining their status as mujahideen rather than on achieving any discernible political goal. The shifting alliances allowed the ameers to stay in business as mujahideen.

The TTP & Human Rights in Pakistan

The violent campaign by the TTP has had an enduring adverse impact on attainment of human rights in Pakistan. The direct effect has been through the targetting of civilians by the TTP and its offshoots. For example, the offshoot Jamaat ul Ahrar killed seventy-five civilians in a park in Lahore on 25 March 2016, describing it as an attack on Easter celebrations. But a pernicious indirect effect of the TTP campaign is that it provided the pretext for a costly counter-insurgency campaign, involving sustained mass displacement of civilians from the tribal areas and an absence of accountability for accusations of summary executions and arbitrary detention.

**Michael Semple**
April 2016

## Glossary

**AQ** – Al Qaeda

**FATA** – Federally Administered Tribal Areas, collective term for the seven administrative units along the eastern section of Pakistan's frontier with Afghanistan. They have a special status retained from the colonial period, and are administered according to the Frontier Crimes Regulation and not the regular criminal code

**IEA** – Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the term used by the Afghan Taliban for the state which they ran 1996-2001. Since 2001 they have used the same name for their shadow administration and military structures

**IS** – Islamic State, the movement headed by Abubakr Baghdadi, previously known as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria or Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

**IMU** – Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan's armed Islamist opposition which has been associated with Al Qaeda since the late 1990s

**JUA** – Jamaat ul Ahraar, lit. the congregation of free men, a splinter of the TTP, announced in 2014, to disassociate itself from Fazlullah's leadership of the movement and position itself closer to IS

**JUI** - Jamiat Ulema Pakistan. The main political party with a base of support in Pakistan's Deobandi ulema. Its JUI-F faction is headed by Maulana Fazlur Rahman

**KP** – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the current name for the old NWFP

**NWFP** – North West Frontier Province, the former name for Pakistan's Pashtun-majority province on the right bank of the River Indus

**TNSM** – Tehreek Nifaz Shariat Mohammadi, movement for the implementation of the the Shariat, an Islamist movement in Malakand Division, formed in 1992, out of which the Swat branch of the Taliban eventually emerged

**TTP** – Tehreek Taliban Pakistan, the main Taliban franchise in the country, established in 2007

## Bibliography

Abbas, Hassan, "The Taliban Revival – Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan – Afghanistan frontier", Yale University Press, New Haven, 2014

Amnesty International, "As if Hell Fell on Me – The Human Rights Crisis in North West Pakistan", Amnesty International, London, 2010

Peters, Gretchen, "Crime and Insurgency in the Tribal Areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan", Harmony Program, CTC, Westpoint, 2010

Zaidi, Syed Manzar Abbas, "Understanding the Appeal of the Taliban in Pakistan", Journal of Strategic Security, Volume 3, No3, 2010

Wadhams, Caroline and Cookman, Colin, "Profiles of Pakistan's Militant Commanders", July 2009, report downloaded from:
 http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/
news/2009/07/22/6316/faces-of-pakistans-militant-leaders/

## Malaiz Daud

*Associate Researcher CIDOB, STAP RP Core Team Member*

## Introduction

This paper aims to explore the direction that the Afghan Taliban Movement is most likely to take in the wake of the death of Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour and the revelation of Mullah Omar's death before the death of the former. It examines these phenomena through looking at a set of organizational and contextual variables, and assesses whether the Taliban is likely to join the peace process initiated by the Afghan government, in the near future. The paper specifically addresses the following questions:

1. What factors led to the selection of Mullah Mansour as the supreme leader of the Taliban and selection of the Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada after the death of the former?
2. What are the opportunities and constraints for the Taliban posed by regional state and non-state actors, in the wake of recent developments (2015 and after)? How may these and the issues examined in question 1 affect the region and what happens in it; and vice versa: how might what happens in the region impact Afghanistan?
3. The paper addresses the political/soft power aspects of this issue, with reference specifically to the peace talks, beyond armed struggle; and briefly sets out the rationale for why this may become more important over time.

The paper examines the structural factors involved in the selection of the new Taliban leaders and takes stock of the structure of opportunities and constraints – particularly on the regional level – to assess future direction of the insurgency.

Part One of the paper looks at the possible factors behind the selection of the specific individuals to become the Taliban supreme leader, the *Amir-ul-Momineen* (leader of the faithful), by going beyond the immediate dynamics of power play within the Taliban leadership - something that has been explored by numerous Taliban observers in recent times. Part Two discusses the developments of the past three years on the regional level, by analyzing the policies and actions of

*\*Malaiz Daud is a Research Associate at CIDOB and a member of the core team of the Sources of Tension in Afghanistan and Pakistan: A Regional Perspective project. He is also a resident scholar at the Berghof Foundation and a PhD candidate from the Free University of Berlin. He served as the Chief of Afghanistan's current president in 2010-11. His areas of research interest are political leadership, social movements, nonviolence, Afghanistan and Pakistan.*

the regional powers that advertently or inadvertently and directly or indirectly affect the balance of war, either in favor of the Taliban or of the current Afghan state. Finally, Part Three assesses the possibility of reaching a political settlement between the National Unity Government (NUG) and the Taliban before the term of the former ends in 2019.

## Part I

The Taliban's swift selection of their new supreme leader after the reign of the former leader, Akhtar Mohammad Mansour was cut short by a drone strike of American forces on May 21 2016, came as a surprise to many observers. Many were also surprised that the latest transition went more smoothly than the one that preceded it. Soon after, there was considerable interest in learning more about the new leader, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, and the reasons behind his selection.

While some initial information about Akhundzada's background came to the light, it was immediately clear how little the outside world knows about the Taliban. There is even less information about why Akhundzada was selected, beyond the observation that he was the least controversial of all contenders. Much of the attention has been focused on what went on during the gathering of the Taliban council that selected the new leader. Little is said about how Taliban's organizational culture, history and perception of its current situation informed the decision of the council. Michael Semple has explored this question from an ideological-procedural perspective in a paper in 2014[1]. However, the issue can further be explored from other angles. This is an attempt in that direction.

Initial information about Akhundzada indicates that he is the antithesis of his predecessor. Mansour was much worldlier, enjoyed a lavish lifestyle, had licit and illicit businesses inside and outside of Afghanistan and ruthlessly cracked down on internal dissent. Akhundzada, on the other hand, is said to live a simple life in the truest Deobandi tradition[2]. He has also established a reputation for consensus-building. Borhan Osman[3] reports that he even has a son enlisted on the roster of Taliban's suicide bombers. This raises the question of how two individuals of such contrasting styles ended up landing the top job within the same movement. Secondly, why was Mansour's selection apparently so controversial, while Akhundzada's selection was not? It is not an easy question to answer given the secrecy surrounding the Taliban as an organization.[4]  Very few people have firsthand information about the selection processes of both leaders, and even fewer have ever spoken about them.

In this paper, the question has been approached through studying: (i) how history and traditions of key social structures that have propped up the movement played a role in the selection process; and (ii) how Mullah Mansour and Mullah Akhundzada's abilities to mobilize specific resources for the movement led to their selection.

**Established Traditions and Existing Structures:**

Afghanistan's clergy has had played a very important role in country's

1.  Semple (2015)
2.  Van Linschoten and Kuehn (2012)
3.  See here: https://www. afghanistan-analysts.org/ taleban-in-transition-how-mansurs-death-and-hibatullahs-ascension-may-affect-the-war-and-peace/
4.  See Kristian Berg Harpviken (2012)

politics – for better or worse – for a long time. Tapping in the steadfast belief of people in Islam, the clergy had, however, never directly ruled the country until 1996. Taliban's emergence as the most cohesive, effective and militant organization of Afghan clergy for once changed their traditional role of ally/challenger to a ruler into a ruler. Afghan rulers, on the other hand, adopted different strategies to deal with the Afghan clergy with varying degrees of success. Amir Abdul Rahman Khan used brute force – as he did against almost all opponents – to deal with the dissent within the clergy. His son, Amir Habibullah Khan, executed the Mullahs who had publically opposed his relations with the British Indian Administration. However, this did not result in an end to stipends allocated to Mullahs. One of the main reasons for Mullahs to join the successful uprising against King Amanullah in 1929 was his decision to stop these stipends[5]. Today, Afghanistan's mosques and Takiakhanas (worship places of Shias) are exempt from paying utility bills. Prayer leaders in the mosques are on the government payroll. Their peers are in politics, business and judiciary.

The Afghan *jihad* against the Soviets provided by far the best opportunity for Afghan clergy to further assert themselves politically and militarily. Afghan mullahs and *ulema* not only joined different *jihadi* outfits but also established and sustained military-political groups that would later play an important role in the Taliban's military and political conquests. While the Taliban certainly do not represent the entire Afghan clergy, they are surely the most organized and resourceful clergy-led organization of the past two decades. Had it not been for the international intervention of 2001, the Taliban in all likelihood would have still ruled the country. After being dethroned, the Taliban decided to wage a military campaign against the new state and its international allies. While success of the campaign in political terms is questioned, its durability in military terms cannot be ignored. The Taliban's sustainability and dedication of its members to the movement was assumed to stem to a great extent from their loyalty to their former leader, Mullah Omar. However, the question is where that sense of loyalty comes from. Was the loyalty due to personal attributions of Mullah Omar or was it by the virtue of the position he was holding? It can be a combination of both. However, looking at it from a historical perspective, it is certainly a function of an organizational culture that seems to have formed the basis of Mufti Rasheed's procedural regulatory framework, according to which the movement is organized and operated. This is not to dismiss other factors such as the personal skills of individual leaders and loyalties to other value systems and social institutions – affiliation to particular tribes, degree of modern education or lack of it thereof, level of exposure outside the movement, etc. It is, nonetheless, of great value to explore the origins of decision-making culture within Taliban, especially now that they have gone through two leadership transitions. It is important to investigate what procedural arrangements were in place for the selection of the new leaders and what are these procedures informed by.

To this end, it is important to take up the discussion of how Taliban leadership transitions were informed by social structural arrangements that run strongest amongst its leaders and rank and file – religious and Afghan identities being the most prominent ones. Most observers have concluded that Mullah Mansour used cooption, appeasement and extortion in his quest to become the supreme leader after the death of Mullah Omar. This is not to dismiss the willingness of a substantial

5.   Chua (2014)

number of members of the Taliban movement to back his bid. He did, however, use his position as the *de facto* leader of the movement to make the position permanent. Mullah Akhundzada was also a deputy before becoming the leader. However, prior to his selection, the chances of his becoming leader were deemed to be slim by many observers, in comparison to those of more celebrated contenders, such as Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mullah Omar's son, Mullah Yaqub,. But was he really such outlier an in the race? One way to approach this question is to look at the tradition and procedure of leadership contests in the socio-political structures that make up today's Taliban.

There is evidence that insurgencies do not come about overnight, as claimed by some in the case of the Taliban. Others have made attempts to dispel this myth by looking at the Taliban "fronts" in the battlefields of Kandahar in 1980s during the anti-Soviet *jihad*. The reality is that there are always "existing social structures"[6] that lend leadership, skills, mobilization and communication capabilities, and legitimacy to social movements. The existing social structures in the case of the Taliban seem to be first and foremost the Deobandi *madrassas* and mullah networks of Pakistan/ Afghanistan that have either become infused in the movement, or which have allied with it ideologically and operationally over time. Most of Taliban leadership boasts some level of *madrassa* education. Many young *madrassa* students still join the movement and fight against the Afghan government. Two mullah-led *mujahideen* parties of Mawlawi Younas Khalis and Mawlawi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi have been heavily represented in the movement. Mullah Omar and the founder of Haqqani network, Jalaluddin Haqqani, were members of Khalis Islamic Party in 1980s. The Mansour[7] family of Zurmat and Mullah Arsala Rahmani of Paktika belonged to the Islamic Revolutionary Movement of Mohammadi before joining the Taliban. One of the reasons why the Taliban have a strong presence in the predominantly non-Pashtun provinces of Takhar and Badakhshan in the northeast, is that both provinces supply a sizeable number of students to *madrassas* in Pakistan.

In that, it is worth exploring the organizational culture of selecting leaders of these solidarity networks, to put into context the factors leading to selection of Mullah Akhundzada. One such factor is seniority in clerical rank. As Van Linschoten and Kuehn put it:

"*The religious students' attitude to religious authority was mostly one of respect. They held the knowledgeable and well-educated in great esteem*"[8].

"*Another factor influenced the idea of religious authority. The Deobandi tradition – and Afghan society in general – included provision for the practice of tasawwuf or Sufism. The relationship between a Sufi elder (pir) and his follower (murid) is a key element that influences how someone will progress in his studies and Sufi practices. Many Afghan religious students – particularly those in the south – were affiliated with Sufi brotherhoods and/or had pirs whom they followed. This was another aspect of the conservative nature of the Taliban. The pir-murid relationship is lasting: teacher and follower form a bond. The Taliban who passed through the madraassas during the 1980s (and, to some extent, rural Afghan in general) were imbued with a respect for those with religious knowledge*".

6.  McAdam (1982); McCarthy and Zald (1977); Van Stekelenburg, Roggeband and Bert Klandermans (2013), p.25
7.  This is a different Mansour, not Akhtar Mohammad Mansour.
8.  Van Linschoten and Kuehn (2012) p.25

The above may partly explain why Mullah Mansour's ascension to power was so fractious, and why Mullah Akhundzada's was so smooth. The latter commanded respect and religious authority, implying that the immaterial resource of religious knowledge is taken in higher esteem than other forms of material resources within the Taliban movement.

It is also important to note that the Taliban's second most important identity is being Afghan, then after that come their tribal and family affiliations[9], which all dictate a respect for a teacher[10], an elder, *speengiray*. Indeed, Afghan traditional decision-making bodies deploy almost identical selection processes to that adopted by the Taliban to select their leaders. *Shuras* and *jirgas* will typically include predominantly grey-haired, older men. The election of a principal leader will come down to his ability to command respect in the community, because of his perceived willingness and ability to create consensus and prevent conflict – other attributes are secondary[11]. It is obviously also important that leaders are materially and militarily powerful and are perceived to be committed to the community's interests, in addition to those of their own. Being a conservative society, mullahs are generally respected because of their importance for the preservation of the identity of the community. Mullahs have also used the opportunity to assert themselves in recent decades in politics. Many local councils include village/district mullahs. The mullahs of major mosques in the cities enjoy celebrity status and frequently give opinions on politics and society, and their opinions count. In the Taliban leadership transitions of the past year, Mullah Mansour clearly used his position as the *de facto* leader of the movement to make his selection possible – in addition to using the established procedures for selection of a leader. Mullah Akhundzada's selection, in contrast, is in large part due to established norms and traditions of the very structures that have played a key role in establishing and sustaining the Taliban. Therefore, it is obvious that leadership contestations and power play of recent times within Taliban have been based on political expediency and necessity as much as "historical accumulation"[12] of certain practices.

To sum up, two lessons can be drawn from the recent leadership transitions of the Taliban: Mullah Mansour's killing will certainly constraint Taliban leadership's ability to operate as effectively as in the past, it does not necessarily mean the whole movement will crumble for being rendered leaderless. Even if no clear succession strategy and plan are in place within the movement, the social structures that have helped sustain the movement – madarassa and mullah networks – will continue to supply the movement with leaders. Second, unless there is a broader national, regional and international consensus to mainstream, integrate, coopt, subjugate or eliminate the madrassa-mullah networks of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Taliban – and its sister jihadi outfits – will easily survive. The consensus will not alone be enough, it will need a sustained, well-resourced long-term effort and a comprehensive implementation strategy. Afghan clergy has weathered acute pressure in the past and it is likely to continue doing so in the foreseeable future.

## A Spiritual Leader vs. a CEO

Insurgencies depend on the mobilization of a complex web of resources to challenge their perceived oppressor. These resources can vary from participants in the movement, to cash, legitimacy, skills, leaders,

9. Van Stekelenburg, Roggeband and Bert Klandermans (2013)
10. Please see Borhan Osman's discussion how Mullah Akhundzada's position as a teachers has earned him more respect here: https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/taleban-in-transition-2-who-is-in-charge-of-the-taleban/
11. Daud (2008)
12. Tilly and Tarrow (2015)

MALAIZ DAUD

existing social structures and so on. The Taliban's current organizational composition and its violent campaign against the Afghan state require a combination of both material and immaterial resources. Taliban leaders have used their social standing, skills and connections to mobilize these resources, to continue to justify and wage violent resistance. From a resource mobilization perspective, the Taliban have mainly accommodated two types of leaders: those that bestow the movement with a high level of legitimacy in the eyes of their ranks and file; and those that contribute in generating participants, finances, weapons, revenue resources, allies and support networks. The classification is not rigidly exclusive, as the main leader will typically have to have the skills to mobilize both material and immaterial resources. However, his strength may lie more in one or in the other. The problem is that there is only one position of the supreme leader that can be held by a member of one of the abovementioned sets of leaders.

When the Taliban were in power, Mullah Mohammad Rabbani was widely assumed to manage the day-to-day affairs of the state – a *de facto* CEO. Mullah Omar provided primarily spiritual guidance and would only occasionally get involved in how state institutions operated on daily basis. After the collapse of the Taliban's emirates, Mullah Omar continued to function in the capacity of a spiritual leader. The Taliban's number two would assume the daily running of operations. Initially, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, as Omar's deputy, worked as the CEO of the movement. However, once he was arrested by the Pakistani security forces - (he remains in custody) - Mullah Mansour was promoted to the position of deputy leader. Both Mullah Baradar and Mansour had a profound knowledge of how to run the Taliban's military as well as logistical operations, how to raise and manage funds and how to run a concerted media/public relations effort. In short, they dealt with and had hands on skills in mobilizing material resources. But as transpired from the first and only round of talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government, the Taliban CEO did have a say in matters of policy but not the final say. This was down to Mullah Omar alone. Pushed to get an edict from Mullah Omar, Mansour forged a message in support of the peace process. As the pressure mounted from other leaders of the Taliban, Mansour had no choice but to reveal that Mullah Omar had died.

Given his limited knowledge of religious matters, Mullah Omar would typically use more authoritative religious scholars to inform the Taliban's policies. This means Mullah Omar was more concerned with the adherence of his men to a strict religious code, rather than to how the organization of these men was sustained. All the Taliban leadership is assumed to have a degree of religious education. However, not everyone is as qualified as Mullah Akhundzada, for instance. Mullah Mansour, on the other hand, was less of a religious scholar and more of an organizational operator. In the wake of his ascension to power, he managed to keep intact the faith of religious authorities, from which the Taliban derived their legitimacy. However, the historical distinction between the functions of the supreme leader and his deputy in the form of a CEO ceased to exist. Neither Mullah Sirajuddin Haqqani's nor Mullah Akhundzada's promotion meant the transfer of operational responsibilities of the entire movement to them. Mansour appears to have remained in charge of all activities. However, he was shrewd

enough to allay any fears of the movement losing its religious identity by bringing Mullah Akhundzada on board, who was also used to woo the Noorzai tribe, important because of the breakaway group of Mullah Rasoul who also happens to be a Noorzai.

The relatively smoother transition from Mullah Mansour to Mullah Akhundzada could be explained by the very nature of the movement's identity, a movement in which knowledge of and strict adherence to the principles of Deobandi Islam take precedence over organizational aspects. In addition to his own exclusionary methods, Mullah Mansour's takeover was partly divisive and disruptive, because he did not command the same respect as a mullah with a proven track record of a deep knowledge of Islam. Besides, he had provoked numerous rivalries in his time as the operational manager of the movement, that would later come back to haunt him. He also could not let go of power, because of his vested interest in retaining his political standing and economic rewards that would only continue through being the most powerful man within the movement. It remains to be seen whether Mullah Akhundzada reverts to being a leader concerned primarily with tasks of guidance and oversight, or whether he too also becomes deeply involved in managing operations. But it does seem the movement has reclaimed its identity – and in effect, legitimacy from its constituents – by appointing a leader that represents the core values of the movement.

## Part II

### The Political Opportunity/Constraint Structure: Regionally-Focused

There is a long-held belief among the scholars of insurgencies[13] that a favorable interplay between insurgencies and the environments they operate in plays a decisive role in success and failure of that insurgency. The environment in which an insurgency operates will present constraining or enabling opportunities. It is up to the insurgency to realize opportunities and manage constraints. Insurgencies also maximize chances of success by mobilizing allies locally, nationally and externally. In today's world, the opportunity/constraint structure has increasingly become multilayered, in which external actors are becoming crucially important to insurgencies[14].

It is this realization that has prompted President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan to portray the Afghan conflict as a regional phenomenon. He claims that countries of the region, including Russia and China, are sending their "misfits" to Afghanistan. Based on this understanding of the conflict dynamics, President Ghani has taken an increasingly regional approach to the Afghan peace process. On the other hand, the presence of the Taliban command and control structures in Pakistan and relations between the Taliban and regional actors for political, military and financial support further elevates the importance of regional powers (India, Iran, China, Russia and Saudi Arabia). In that regard, it is important to establish whether developments in the region are hindering or further facilitating Taliban's insurgency. Similarly, it needs to be seen how Afghanistan and its current state are affected by the actions of its powerful neighbors.

[13]. For example, the Taliban's success in driving defeating other groups in 1990s was partly due to infighting amongst the mujahideen groups, because of which civilians welcomed Taliban for restoring order. Another example is that of the Chechen insurgency, which resurfaced once the Soviet Union collapsed. The insurgents perceived the Russian state as weak in this period of transition, launching their campaign.

[14]. For more on political opportunity/constrain structure, see: Guigni (2009), Meyer (2004), Meyer et.al. (2004) and Gamson et.al. (1996), McAdam (1982)

MALAIZ DAUD

This section uses data from ten Afghanistan Quarterly Monitoring Briefs (QMBs) of the policy research project, Sources of Tension in Afghanistan and Pakistan: A Regional Perspective (STAP-RP). The QMBs cover the whole of 2013 and 2014 and the period from December 2015 to April 2016. Events of 2015 are also considered in the content of the paper. The data presented reflects the level of support, opposition or indifference on the part of the concerned regional powers towards the Afghan state alone, not to the Taliban. Therefore, the paper works from the assumption that the higher the level of support to the Afghan state, the higher the pressure on the Taliban.

**India**

India has had a consistent policy of supporting stability, economic development and broader trade in Afghanistan. It has also made sure that it has supported the positions of successive post-2001 Afghan government vis-à-vis the Taliban. For instance, India strongly sided with the Afghan government when the latter expressed its displeasure over the manner of opening the Taliban Doha office[15] in 2013. However, in spite of a spate of attacks against Indian interests in Afghanistan, India was initially unwilling to reciprocate by providing heavy armaments to Afghanistan[16] and interests in Afghanistan have largely gone unreciprocated. The final straw in this policy was rejection of Karzai's request for lethal weapons in 2013, which may have partly stemmed from India's calculation not to provoke[17] Pakistan.

As the attacks have continued, India's commitment to support Afghanistan economically, politically and more importantly militarily has further firmed up. From using international platforms to accuse Pakistan for harboring terrorists[18] to finally agreeing to provide helicopters to the Afghan Air Force (AAF), India has proved to be the most reliable partner in the region for the Afghan state. When President Ghani came to power, there were in India about the reliability of the new Afghan government as a close ally, compared to the previous one. Those concerns were reinforced amidst President Ghani's rapprochement with Pakistan. Prime Minister Narendra Modi government, on the other hand, appointed Ajit Kumar Doval as the new National Security Advisor[19] - a well-known hawk – indicating a more assertive India role in taking on groups such as the Taliban.

Despite New Delhi's concerns, President Ghani's rapprochement to Pakistan in 2015 meant he had to make some concessions which limited cooperation with India. Indeed, one of Ghani's first actions was to suspend a request to India for heavy weaponry which had been lodged by his predecessor.[20] . Closer ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan and keeping India at arm's length did not sit well with Delhi but it continued the ongoing projects in a bid to wait out the Afghan-Pakistani honeymoon period.

As may have been expected, the relationship between Islamabad and Kabul soon started to sour and the latter reached out to Delhi to continue its assistance. Whilst initially cold shouldered, Delhi soon reassessed[21], delivering a Mi 25 helicopter in 2015,[22] with three more following soon after. This was significant, because the delivery of lethal

**15.** See: http://www.indianexpress.com/news/taliban-qatar-office-india-draws-line-on-afghan-peace-process/1132312/

**16.** See: http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c?utm_expid=23328448-5&utm_referrer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.brookings.edu%2Fsearch%3Fstart%3D1%26q%3Dbrookings%2Bessay

**17.** See: http://www.firstpost.com/world/why-india-is-concerned-about-supplying-arms-to-afghanistan-800711.html

**18.** See: http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-09-29/news/42482070_1_jammu-and-kashmir-kashmir-issue-bilateral-dialogue

**19.** For more about Doval, see: http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ajit-doval-giant-among-spies-reports-back-for-duty-soon/article1-1223709.aspx

**20.** See: http://thediplomat.com/2015/02/why-did-afghanistan-just-suspend-a-request-for-heavy-weaponry-from-india/

**21.** See: http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-rebuffs-afghanistan-on-strategic-meet/article7592059.ece

**22.** See: http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/mi-25-attack-helicopter-gifted-by-india-to-afghanistan-reaches-kabul-3-more-to-follow/articleshow/50275035.cms

capability to Afghanistan has long been a contentious issue due to objections by Pakistan. This is a key contribution to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) who are in dire need of airpower. In the absence of NATO air support, the Taliban have managed to move around in large groups and launch frontal wars in several provinces, according to Haneef Atmar, Afghanistan's National Security Advisor[23].

India's military support is augmented by projection of soft power in the form of development and reconstruction projects. Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the newly-built building for the Afghan parliament in 2015. He used the occasion to deliver an impassioned and comprehensive speech, also taking direct and indirect swipes at Pakistan[24]. The visit signified long-term commitment of India to Afghanistan, despite the NUG's earlier snub. Modi was again in Afghanistan in June 2016 to inaugurate the $ 290-million Salma dam in the western province of Herat. Construction of Salma dam was completed in spite of security threats and attempts to disrupt the project. The jubilation across the country with which this was met, highlighted India's growing influence achieved through development projects. This was preceded in May of the same year by signing of the Chabahar Port agreement between Afghanistan, India and Iran.

**Iran**

Iran and Afghanistan were set to sign a strategic agreement whose draft was prepared in 2013. Regardless of that, Iran has supported the Afghan state politically and economically. It has also made efforts to replace Pakistan as the main linkage for transportation of goods to and fro Afghanistan as it has strived to broaden its economic interests in Afghanistan. It has, at the same time, supported individual political groups at the cost of derailing Afghan state institutions. For instance, Iran was accused of providing financial support to groups loyal to it in the run up to the 2014 presidential election of Afghanistan. Despite reports in Kabul that Iran and Russia were behind further complicating the ensuing election impasse, the highest echelon of the Iranian government continued to reiterate that it would respect the result of the election and that it was prepared to cooperate and even expand relations with the incoming government.

On the other hand, Iran used to oppose Western military presence in Afghanistan, has engaged in talks with the Taliban, has invited them for conferences[25] and even, allegedly, supplies arms[26] to them. Afghan refugees have been maltreated by Iran, creating an international outcry. Afghan refugees have even been enticed or forced to fight for Syrian government. There are reportedly 8000 Afghans fighting alongside the Assad army.

Once the National Unity Government (NUG) was established in Kabul, both President Ghani and CEO Abdullah visited Tehran in 2015. As expected, Afghanistan's pro-Iran Second Deputy CEO, Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq, has visited the country multiple times. The visits seem to have had little bearing on the already ongoing relations.

Signing the agreement for developing the Chabahar port represents a real opportunity for the current Afghan government to circumvent

23. See his interview with 1TV (in Dari): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpFiJv-2TBA
24. See the full text at: http://www.thehindu.com/news/resources/text-of-modis-speech-to-afghan-parliament/article8029269.ece
25. See: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/irans-hosting-of-taliban-reflects-desire-for-greater-role/2011/09/28/gIQAkmwO7K_print.html
26. See: http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/10771-kandahar-police-chief-concerned-over-pakistan-iran-intervention

MALAIZ DAUD

Pakistan's current monopoly over the Afghan transit trade. It also poses a real danger of further prolonging the Afghan conflict. Pakistan is not going to sit on its hands and watch India and Afghanistan increase mutual trade and have Iran join their bloc, especially after Pakistan failed – initially at least - to implement its part of the IPI gas pipeline agreement. Pakistan's ability to jeopardize regional schemes in Afghanistan can easily be projected by groups such as the Haqqani Network. Therefore, the Taliban's position becomes tenuous because of having established links with Iran. Although the situation has improved significantly in favor of the Afghan state in the last couple of years, Iran and the Taliban have enjoyed a marriage of convenience for some time now. It will be interesting to see if the Taliban will risk its relationship with Iran by addressing Pakistan's concerns. The Taliban are said to be hoping to reduce their reliance on Pakistan by reaching out to Iran. Mullah Mansour's visits to Iran are said to be part of the abovementioned strategy. However, the killing of Mullah Mansour on the way back from Iran – some say for family visit, others claim for medical reasons, indicates that Iran still has left open channels of communication with the Taliban. The fear of Daesh/IS has further strengthened Iran's resolve to continue cooperating with the Taliban on a certain level.

Daesh's creation has also has an effect on Iran's attitude towards Afghan refugees, from whom it attracts foot soldiers to fight against Western-supported opposition in Syria and, obviously, Daesh. Previously, Iran constantly harassed Afghan refugees, chided Afghan officials for the presence of American troops in Afghanistan and openly invited Afghan Taliban for meetings until mid-2014. The situation has changed considerably now. Harassment of refugees has receded, Iranian officials are tightlipped about the presence of foreign bases in Afghanistan and Taliban contacts are not as public as they used to be.

## China

China sought a safe distance from the "graveyard of the empires"[27] not long ago. However, China's Afghanistan policy began to change in part due to their fear of relapse of Afghanistan into the hands of Islamic extremist groups that will encourage "growth of (Uighur) Muslim extremism on Chinese territory, supported from across the border with Pakistan"[28], using Afghanistan for their training and other support activities. This perception was strengthened by an incident in Xinjiang region in 2013, in which 21 people died in clashes, including 15 police officers[29]. The China-India counter-terrorism summit[30] on Afghanistan and its first public warning[31] in 2012 to Pakistan on activities of extremists in Pakistan pointed to a slight shift in China's views on the security in the region in 2013.

There were also reports in 2013 that Chinese officials allegedly met Taliban representatives[32] in order to impress upon them to deny members of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) an external breeding ground also to ensure the viability of its extractive projects after the withdrawal of the NATO troops in 2014. Publically, it was sending reassuring messages to the Afghan government. For instance, it claims to support an "*Afghan-led and owned peace*" process in Afghanistan.

27. Analysis about China's intentions for not getting involved in Afghanistan: http://thediplomat.com/2013/04/05/chinas-afghanistan-challenge/comment-page-1/

28. http://www.cidobafpakproject.com/

29. See report at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-22276042

30. See: http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-04-11/india/38462542_1_boundary-negotiations-dai-bingguo-counter-terrorism-talks

31. See: http://www.arabtimesonline.com/NewsDetails/tabid/96/smid/414/ArticleID/172107/reftab/69/t/China-blames-Pakistan-trained-militants-for-attack-/Default.aspx

32. Regarding Taliban meetings with Chinese officials, see the analysis at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/20/why_is_china_talking_to_the_taliban

Remarks by President Karzai in September 2013 stating that China was "*quietly backing the peace process in Afghanistan*"[33] were interpreted by observers to imply that China was working behind the scenes to convince Pakistan to play a more constructive role in Afghanistan.

Since Afghanistan neither provided major economic returns nor was it seen as an important geostrategic country, China's interest in 2013-14 was limited to making sure Afghanistan does not relapse into a full-blown civil war, nor was it prepared to see a country completely in the realm of American influence. Thus, it always lent support to the development of Afghanistan and also urged respect for its national sovereignty at the same time. This changed with the attacks[34] in Tiananmen Square (October 2013) and the Kunming and Urumqi train stations (early 2014), reportedly carried out by Islamists. These resulted in a paradigm shift in China's policy toward Afghanistan. Soon after, China's Foreign Minister visited Kabul, and subsequently, China unexpectedly upped the tempo of its diplomatic activities in relation to Afghanistan. China planned, postponed and then finally hosted the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process ministerial meeting in October 2014[35]. Nonetheless, there were still lingering suspicions in Kabul that China might be willing to negotiate with the Taliban in the future, On the other hand, the Chinese government accepted to train a limited number of Afghan police personnel in its country and began to conduct a joint project with the US government to train Afghan diplomats. Finally, China has already increased its assistance to Afghanistan by many folds and has strengthened its diplomatic links on multiple levels[36].

As interaction between China and Afghanistan increased progressively through 2014, China's decision to appoint a Special Envoy for Afghanistan further strengthened the view that China was getting more involved there. Assertions from Beijing indicated that China – like Russia – was clearly concerned about the prospect of another implosion of the Afghan state. China's domestic problems in Xinjiang[37] finally seemed to have a telling affect on its policy towards Afghanistan. It radically increased its diplomatic efforts in relation to the country. Some Chinese newspapers reported in 2014 that there was consensus between Kabul and Beijing on the question of extremist groups, such as ETIM. China's policy is now to couple domestic development schemes with working together with Pakistan and Afghanistan on a regional platform[38] to curtail Islamic extremism[39].

China was considered by Afghan and American officials to be in a position to play a key role in the peace process of Afghanistan because of its relationship with Pakistan.[40] China had already facilitated two Track II meetings on its soil and there were Chinese emissaries in the first direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Murree on July 7, 2015. Most importantly, China became one of the parties of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG), along with Afghanistan, Pakistan and the US[41], which has so far failed to convince the Taliban to join the peace talks.

China went from holding secret meetings with Taliban representatives to sending high level delegations to Kabul, assigning a Special Envoy to Afghanistan, providing military training and participating in efforts to launch negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

33. See: http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/27/china-backs-afghan-us-security-pact

34. See: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-26402367

35. See conference report: http://www.heartofasia-istanbulprocess.af/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Fourth-HoA-Ministerial-Conference.pdf

36. For detailed reports on China-Afghanistan interactions, see reports from 2013 and 2014 at: http://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/stap_rp/policy_research_papers/afghanistan_the_regional_powers_an_overview_of_2013 and http://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/stap_rp/policy_research_papers/afghanistan_overview_of_sources_of_tension_with_regional_implications_2014/(language)/eng-US . For a summary of recent high-level visits by Chinese officials and figures on increase in aid, see: http://carnegie-mec.org/2015/03/08/what-is-behind-china-s-growing-attention-to-afghanistan

37. See: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-29373158

38. For more details, see: http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13270-beijing-waivers-on-afghanistan-security-commitment.html

39. For an overview of how low-key China's involvement in Afghanistan was, prior to 2014, see: http://csis.org/files/publication/120322_Zhao_ChinaAfghan_web.pdf

40. We have covered China's contacts with Taliban in our previous reports. However, there are also other reports like this one: http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/chinas-foreign-policy-afghanistan

41. See the statement at: http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/joint-press-release-the-second-meeting-of-the-quadrilateral-coordination-group-qcg-of-afghanistan-pakistan-the-united-states-and-china

MALAIZ DAUD

Reported emergence of the Daesh is yet another alarming development for the Chinese. China – like Iran – has also stopped expressing reservations about the presence of Western troops in Afghanistan. Its partnership with the US on Afghanistan has evolved from offering joint training for a handful of Afghan diplomats to becoming a key member of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG). China will not tolerate an Islamist state next door so has every intention to bring the Taliban under the framework of the current Afghan state.

**Russia**

Until a few years ago, Russia claimed to maintain a hands-off approach because of its recent history with Afghanistan but was clearly concerned by the US military presence in Afghanistan. Ironically, it has actively taken part in counter-narcotics operations because of its toll on the Russian society, posing "an internal security challenge"[42]. Russian officers were part of a counter-narcotics operation in eastern Afghanistan in March of 2013.

Russia's support to the counter-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan was negligible in 2013but post-2014 Afghanistan was of a great concern for the Russian authorities as they, like the Chinese and Saudis, feared the rise of extremism and Afghanistan's becoming a hotbed for international terrorism. This led to Russia's getting increasingly involved with the countries of the region to ensure stability in Afghanistan, making Afghanistan top priority during its presidency of the UN Security Council and convening and participating in numerous multilateral and trilateral talks on Afghanistan in 2013.

Besides, Russia was also visibly concerned at the prospect of another chaos in Afghanistan that might have affected adversely[43] the security of Tajikistan and the rest of central Asian states bordering Afghanistan. Russians suspected based on their past experience of the Tajikistan and Uzbekistan insurgencies and the Chechen war of 1990s that its Islamist foes in the Caucuses will find renewed impetus[44] in the event of instability in post-2014 Afghanistan. As a result, Russia was a reliable partner to the countries with military presence in Afghanistan. It was deemed in Russia's interest to see the international community provide Afghanistan with the resources and training to combat terrorism and international drug trade.

However, these concerns did not stop Russian officials – President Vladimir Putin in particular – from criticizing the American policy globally but also in relation to Afghanistan. However, they emphasized the fact that in Afghanistan their interests converged with those of the US and its allies. Russia and the Central Asian states are alarmed[45] by the increase in violence in Afghanistan. The rapid rise of Da´esh/IS in Iraq and Syria has increased the urgency on the part of the former Soviet Union states to develop solid options to blunt any threats directed at them by Islamic extremist groups. Despite Russia and the West's relations being at the lowest level, Russia's government (and President Putin in particular) is keen for the West to stay engaged in Afghanistan.

Russia kept a consistent non-belligerent policy towards the US and its allies' role in Afghanistan[46] until 2015, when Russia's bombing campaign

**42.** http://www.cidobafpakproject.com/content/informe.pdf

**43.** See: http://en.ria.ru/russia/20130528/181391339/Russia-Led-Group-to-Beef-Up-Tajik-Afghan-Border-Security.html

**44.** See: http://www.meforum.org/744/how-chechnya-became-a-breeding-ground-for-terror

**45.** See: http://www.rferl.org/content/central-asia-afghanistan-threat/26607887.html

**46.** See an account of how Russia is wary of the US presence in Afghanistan but still wants the US to be present in Afghanistan: http://as.ucpress.edu/content/55/2/398 . For examples of cooperation and intelligence sharing see: http://www.interfax.com/newsinf.asp?id=492026 and http://www2.ewi.info/events/6th-meeting-joint-us-russia-working-group-afghan-narcotrafficking

in Syria further widened the gap between Russia, regional powers such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia and the US and EU. This situation created a new dynamic in Afghanistan-Russian relations, with reports emerging of President Vladimir Putin's alleged meeting with the Taliban's leader in December 2015 in Dushanbe.[47] Unnamed Taliban members were reported in the media as having asserted that Putin promised financial resources, training and modern military hardware to the Taliban in the fight against Da´esh/ISIS in Afghanistan. The reports were, however, been denied by both the Taliban and by Russian officials. Nonetheless, Russia's special envoy to Afghanistan said in October 2015 that his government's interests "*objectively coincide*" with those of the Taliban and that there are channels of communication between them,[48] reported by a credible source as having been established some two years ago[49]

Moreover, Russia's decision to ally with the Taliban could have been influenced by the pledging of allegiance to ISIS by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in the wake of the death of Mullah Omar (the group was formerly allied to the latter). Before this, Russia had always seen the Taliban as the potential source of support to the extremist groups in Central Asia, thus imposing sanctions on the group. In response to the fall of Kunduz, Russia deployed attack and transport helicopters to a base in Tajikistan to rebuff any imminent threats, as a support for claims by the Tajikistan President that there is insecurity along 60 percent of his country's border with Afghanistan[50].

President Ghani also traveled to Russia to attend the SCO summit in July 2015 and met President Putin on the sidelines. The meeting was followed by a visit by Afghanistan's first vice president to Moscow in October of 2015. However, the visit which got more press coverage was that of Afghanistan's former President, Hamid Karzai, in June of 2015. Karzai claimed during the visit that relations between the two countries were "*blossoming*".[51]

The trend of Russia's engagement in Afghanistan has been the opposite of that of China. Russia's engagement in 2013 was of that of support to both the international forces and the Afghan state – with occasional, symbolic digs aimed at the US[52]. Russia stepped in to support the US when the Pakistani government suspended transport of US military goods through its territory in the wake of Osama Bin Laden' death in Abbottabad.

The relationship, though, witnessed a downward spiral amidst the Arab Spring uprisings. Differences over Libya created further strictures. The situations of Syria and Ukraine clearly put the West and Russia on a confrontational course with each other. This, however, did not affect their partnership in Afghanistan in a major way for quite some time. In early 2016, Russia finally announced it was ceasing all cooperation with the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Soon after, NATO and Russia talks were revived. Russia once again announced that the only issue, over which there is consensus between the two sides is Afghanistan.

Subsequently, Russians supplied big arms caches to the Afghan government this year, despite the fallout with the NATO. This preceded the reported meeting of President Vladimir Putin with the Taliban's former leader, Mullah Mansour, in Tajikistan in late 2015. The meeting

47. See: http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/the-times/taliban-leader-gains-vladimir-putins-help-at-secret-meeting/news-story/c212a1f20b685fae034c63ea7b-0cdb89

48. See: http://sputniknews.com/politics/20151026/1029128786/russia-taliba-communication.html

49. Waheed Mozhda, an analyst and Taliban sympathizer, made the revelation. Mozhda's telephone was tapped by the NDS, recording his conversations with members of the Taliban. He acted as an interlocutor of Taliban in Kabul and Russian authorities used him as one of their contacts to the insurgent group.

50. See: http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-tajikistan-base-helicopters/27293028.html

51. See: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49760

52. For example, see: https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2015/07/10/putin-criticizes-role-afghanistan-saying-security-hasn-improved/lTfpvFEOWYFMfzJnj5BxSM/story.html

MALAIZ DAUD

and consequent coy statements by Russian officials revealed that Russia was counting on the Taliban – in addition to the Afghan government – to blunt the Daesh threat in Afghanistan. President Putin claimed Daesh was present in 25 provinces of Afghanistan. The Taliban, on the other hand, claimed Russia had promised them funding and military support. If true and still in place, this would be a major breakthrough for the Taliban, which could sustain them for the foreseeable future. This may also quickly change however if it irks the USA too much.

## Saudi Arabia

The Saudi authorities have generally kept a distance from Afghanistan. They have not become as directly involved as Afghan governments since 2001 would have hoped. However, they have provided the space for unofficial meetings between Afghan government representatives and insurgents. President Hamid Karzai repeatedly request Saudi Arabia's active involvement in the Afghan peace process to no avail. Under his presidency, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan signed a number of agreements new that covered a broad range of areas,[53] from commerce to youth, culture and sports. The two countries have also signed an agreement for establishing an Islamic studies center, a mosque and a university in Kabul. The construction of the complex is estimated to cost a staggering US$ 100 million. The mosque alone will be big enough to accommodate 10 to 20 thousand worshipers at a time.

During President Ghani's first trip to Saudi Arabia in 2014, there was also talk of a strategic cooperation agreement between the two countries. It remains to be seen what the final product will entail to assess what the future role of Saudi Arabia in Afghanistan will be. 2015 saw increased interaction between Saudi and Afghan officials. The biggest turning point, however, was President Ghani's visit to Riyadh on March 16, 2015. Ghani was received at the airport by King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud himself[54] – an unprecedented gesture on the part of Saudis. The main outcome of Ghani's visit to the Kingdom was agreement on creating a framework for a strategic partnership. Such warm welcome by Saudi authorities to the new President of Afghanistan may have partially been down to Ghani's cordial relationship with the US and partially because Ghani's bloc managed to defeat the Abdullah Abdullah bloc in the presidential election, which is perceived by the Saudis as more pro-Iranian.

Although little is known about the exact nature of Saudi's Afghanistan policy because of the opacity of its government, revelations by the Taliban that they were pressured by the Saudis not to cause major disruptions during the 2014 presidential election point to an assertive policy of safeguarding its interests in Afghanistan. Saudis feared that Taliban's disruption of election will hit hardest the Pashtun areas, which would dent Ghani's chances and give an edge to Abdullah. According to the report in question, "*promises were also made for rewards if the Taliban complied with Saudi demands, including facilitation in future negotiations with the new president*"[55]. If true, Ghani owes his becoming the president partly to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. This may explain Ghani's reciprocal actions in making concessions to Pakistan and supporting Saudi's military campaign in Yemen[56]. However, Pakistan

**53.** For more details, see.: http://mfa. gov.af/en/News/19748

**54.** See the report: http://president.gov. af/en/news/42995

**55.** See the full report: http://www. usip.org/sites/default/files/ PW103-Violence-the-Taliban-and-Afghanistan-s-2014-Elections.pdf

**56.** In Dari: http://www.dw.com/ fa-af/%D9%88%D9%84%D8%B3 %DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%B1% DA%AF%D9%87-%D8%AD% D9%85%D8%A7% DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9 %81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86 %D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7% D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B2-% D8%B9%D9%B1%D8%A8%D8 %B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9% 86-%D8%BA%DB%8C%D8%B1 %D9%85%D8%B3%D9%88% D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7% D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A8% D9%88%D8%AF/a-18361625

still is the most important ally in the region for Saudi Arabia despite the fallout because of Pakistan's reluctance to participate in the Yemen war. Reports suggest that Pakistan, if needed, may even be prepared to supply nuclear warheads to the Saudis based on a tacit understanding and the former's generous funding to the Pakistani nuclear program.[57]

President Ghani targeted Saudi Arabia – as well as China – in an effort to use its leverage over Pakistan to get the Taliban to negotiating table. Despite some promises, Saudis never seriously made an effort to mediate between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Lately, they have grown even more uninterested because of the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, Saudi rivalry with Iran and the effect of dwindling crude oil prices on its economy. Therefore, they are the least important regional power for Afghanistan presently, despite having the potential to be the most powerful.

## Conclusion

Despite predictions of possible fissures within the Taliban in the wake of revelation of Mullah Omar's death, the Taliban movement has managed to maintain a high level of unity. Mullah Akhundzada's ascension similarly did not result in partial or complete fragmentation of the movement. This internal resilience is certainly a culmination of a combination of structural, political, cultural and cognitive factors. Once such factor is the relative clarity of succession procedures, levels of hierarchy and division of labor and authorities that stems from the existing practices of the socio-political structures which form the Taliban movement. Therefore, while the killing of Taliban leaders may inhibit the operational capability of the movement, it will not result in it complete dissolution. Even if the movement is disbanded voluntarily or involuntarily, the prerequisite for the reestablishment of the same movement or a similar movement in the form of *madrassa*-mullah networks will still exist, and may even thrive, should further opportunities arise. After all, *mujahideen* parties and even the leftist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) have all survived in some shape and form for close to a half century.

Therefore, efforts to defeat the Taliban militarily and dismantle the movement altogether will prove futile in the short term. The Taliban movement's strength lies in its support network, which provides the movement with not only leadership but also foot soldiers, amongst other resources. The Taliban's depiction of being merely a puppet, playing in the hands of the Pakistani military is untrue, thus unhelpful. The movement has the potential to survive without the support of the Pakistani military. It may be considerably weakened but it will not vanish altogether.

It is also important to note that the weaknesses and shortcomings of the current Afghan state have provided the opportunity for the Taliban to garner some support in some parts of the country, or at least be tolerated because of the lack of confidence in the capacity of the state to keep the Taliban at bay. It is equally important to note that the Taliban have created and availed opportunities on the regional level too. Their contacts with China, Russia and Iran and their business ventures

57. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24823846

in Pakistan and Gulf states have enabled the movement to create a semblance of having a degree of legitimacy outside Pakistan and Afghanistan. The five regional powers covered in this paper have not attempted to emphatically inhibit Taliban's operations. Pakistan, on the other hand, appears to have facilitated Taliban's military operations in Afghanistan and fund-raising activities across the region. Pakistan has also been considered to have facilitated links between the Taliban with countries in the region such as China.

Nonetheless, there has been a growing support for the current Afghan state in the region. The regional political opportunity structure may not be as favorable for the Taliban in the future as it is today. The longer the current Afghan state survives, the more consolidated its position on the regional level will become. The Taliban will have to join mainstream politics sooner or later, as the regional and international appetite for continuing strife in Afghanistan is waning. Joining a political process for a settlement is the only realistic course of action for both sides in the long term. For now, the Taliban will pose the greatest threat to the current Afghan state by conducting military attacks against it. It is hard to foretell how long the Taliban movement will survive. However, the clergy will remain a key constituency in the political scene of Afghanistan for quite some time to come.

## Bibliography:

Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970-2010 (Hurst 2012)

Chua, Andrew. "The Promise and Failure of King Amanullah's Modernisation Program in Afghanistan." *The ANU Undergraduate Research Journal Volume Five, published* (2014).

Gamson, William A., and David S. Meyer. *Framing political opportunity*. 1996.

Giugni, Marco. "Political opportunities: from Tilly to Tilly." *Swiss Political Science Review* 15.2 (2009): 361-367.

Harpviken, Kristian Berg. "The transnationalization of the Taliban." *International Area Studies Review* 15.3 (2012): 203-229.

McAdam, Doug. *Political process and the development of black insurgency, 1930-1970*. University of Chicago Press, 2010.

McCarthy, John D., and Mayer N. Zald. "Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory." *American journal of sociology* (1977): 1212-1241.

Meyer, David S. "Protest and political opportunities." *Annual review of sociology* (2004): 125-145.

Meyer, David S., and Debra C. Minkoff. "Conceptualizing political opportunity." *Social forces* 82.4 (2004): 1457-1492.

Semple, Michael. *Rhetoric, Ideology and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement.* Washington: USIP, 2015.

Tilly, Charles and Tarrow, Sidney. *Contentious Politics.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Van Stekelenburg, Jacquelien, Conny Roggeband, and Bert Klandermans. *The Future of Social Movement Research*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

# REFUGEES & THE BRAIN DRAIN

- PREAMBLE: AFGHANS AS SECOND-CLASS REFUGEES IN PARTS OF EUROPE

  *Thomas Ruttig*

- "GOING, GOING... ONCE AGAIN GONE?" THE HUMAN CAPITAL OUTFLOW FROM AFGHANISTAN POST 2014 ELECTIONS

  *Susanne Schmeidl*

- THE VOICES BEHING THE REFUGEE OUTFLOW FROM AFGHANISTAN

  *Hameed Hakimi and Barin S. Haymon*

# PREAMBLE: AFGHANS AS SECOND-CLASS REFUGEES IN PARTS OF EUROPE

**Thomas Ruttig**

*Co-Director, Afghanistan Analysts Network, Kabul/Berlin*

After the Syrians, Afghan became the largest group of refugees in Europe in 2015 – with 14 per cent (178,000) of the 1.26 million refugees who literally reached the continent's shores after perilous journeys through Iran and Turkey, where they were shot at by border guards and harassed by way-layers and the very smugglers they were paying to ferry them to their destination. Among them, 51 per cent of the 88,300 under-age, unaccompanied refugees that made it into the EU (45.295) were Afghans.

After a short period where refugees were welcomed, many EU countries have meanwhile closed their borders and migrations routes as well as tightened asylum laws and increased hurdles for accepting asylum seekers. In some cases, governments gave in to the pressure exerted by the soaring wave of semi-fascist populist movements who particularly see refugees from Muslim-populated countries as a 'threat to European culture'.

In Germany, the biggest recipient of refugees in 2015 in absolute terms, for example, asylum applications by Afghans were put on the back burner and the applicants excluded from language courses - (they are excluded from entering the legal job market anyway) - in order to create an atmosphere in which they would see a 'voluntary' return to their country as the only remaining option. This political about-face started in November 2015 when the government argued that the Afghans' *Bleibechancen* (chances to stay) were too low. (The number of Afghans who received any protection status was 47,6 per cent in 2015 and remained at that level in the first quarter of 2016 – around 2 per cent below the level were "good chances" begin.)

Those practices have not only undermined the individuality of the right to asylum but also threaten a return of the political asylum quotas of the 1980s and 1990s. Then, Afghans fleeing the pro-Soviet regime had very high chances of being given full political asylum (37 per cent in 1991), while this rate dropped to 10.9 per cent (1993) for those fleeing the mujahedin regime.

Plans for the deportation of rejected Afghan asylum seekers and the use of aid as leverage to pressure the Afghan government into accepting Afghan deportees (which it currently does not do), both in individual countries and EU-wide, have been publicly pondered by politicians. In March 2016, an internal draft EU policy documents, in preparation for the October 2016 Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, surfaced, stating that "more than 80,000 [Afghans] could potentially need to be returned in the near future". (The EU later denied that such proposals were on the table.)

A number of governments, including those of Germany and the UK, have either started suggesting that there were "safe zones" or "safe provinces" in Afghanistan into which deportees could be sent or already do so.

All these measures, however, have not significantly decreased the number of Afghan refugees in the first months of 2016. The number of arrivals, combined for Italy and Greece, was 194,845 by 25 May – with 21 per cent of them Afghans.

This is not surprising, as it reflects the actual security situation on the ground. There, the Taliban are expanding territorial control after the withdrawal of most western soldiers, the Afghan government forces are struggling to contain them and western governments have halted the planned withdrawal or even increased troop numbers again. For the first time, the Taliban captured a provincial capital, Kunduz, in 2015, and other cities are under imminent threat. This combines with a deepening socio-economic crisis (with almost half of the Afghan population below the poverty line) and a crisis of confidence in the widely paralysed National Unity Government.

It is difficult to distinguish security-related and economically-driven motives for Afghans to leave their country. But the timing of the sharp increase of Afghan refugee numbers in Europe in 2015 suggests that the acutely worsening security situation was the trigger, while the dire socio-economic situation, that exists since decades, provide the substrata on which the decision to leave ripens.

The two CIDOB reports on Afghan migration issue – by Susanne Schmeidl and Hameed Hakimi and Barin Haymon – provide valuable additional insights into these dynamics, that will likely continue for at least the foreseeable future.

# "GOING, GOING ... ONCE AGAIN GONE?"
## THE HUMAN CAPITAL OUTFLOW FROM AFGHANISTAN POST 2014 ELECTIONS

**Susanne Schmeidl**

*Afghanistan scholar and practitioner*

## 1. Introduction/Background

The recent buzz about the impact of the political and security transition in Afghanistan (withdrawal of international military by the end of 2014 and mid-2014 presidential elections) has overshadowed a far more important underlying demographic and development challenge that the country shares with other least developed nations: rapid population growth[1] and urbanization.[2]

In contrast to population growth, economic and development prospects in Afghanistan have been modest at best. Though some Afghans have become extremely rich over the last decade, many in the country are unhappy about the balance between the resources and money poured into their country since 2001 and progress on key social and economic indicators. Despite concerted international effort over the past decade, a third of the population still lives below the absolute poverty line (less than US$1/day) and half are so close to living in poverty that any small shock could move them to the brink.[3] A slowing in international assistance recently burst the externally-propped up economic bubble (85% of the Afghan budget comes from abroad), with Afghanistan's 'remarkable' annual economic growth plunging from a steady 9% since 2002 to 3.1% in 2013.[4] Exports and state revenues followed suit, and so did private investment.[5] This provides a sobering reality for all the aid dollars spent and puts the Afghan economy in dire straits at a time when it has to accommodate for an ever-growing young labour force: those under the age of 25 make up nearly two-thirds of the Afghan population (estimated at around 30 million).[6]

Even excluding increased insecurity and high political uncertainty, factors such as demographic stress in the form of a rapidly growing cohort of potential young migrants hoping to enter higher-wage labour markets, competition over a scarce resource base and a deteriorating economy already present a *smorgasbord* of classic migration drivers.[7] Adding to this the prevailing insecurity and a growing internal conflict in an uncertain transition environment, there should be no surprises that relocation (external or internal) will continue to function as a coping mechanism for many Afghans for years to come; especially as mobility

*Susanne Schmeidl is a Co-Founder and Senior Advisor to The Liaison Office in Afghanistan. She also lectures at the Universities of New South Wales and Sydney, Australia, focusing on the interception of security and development, specifically on the themes of forced displacement, human security, protection of civilians, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, especially in Afghanistan.*

1. United Nations Population Fund 2013
2. Giovacchini 2011
3. Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, December 2013
4. Ruttig 2013, see also Suhrke 2012 on Afghanistan's rentier state, and Hogg *et al.* 2013 for an analysis of other economic impacts of the transition
5. Ruttig 2013
6. *National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12,* p.xvi [referred to as NRVA 2011-12 from here on]
7. These factors were found driving both European and African emigration; Hatton and Williamson 2001

has long served as an economic survival strategy even before the three decades of seemingly never-ending conflict.[8]

A population already struggling with considerable economic and demographic stress, dealing with a stalled peace process, rising levels of insecurity and associated toll of civilian casualties, may have problems absorbing yet another considerable shock in the form of an uncertain political future, which the 2014 electoral dispute between the two main presidential candidates foreshadows. Migration scholars demonstrated long ago that there are forces that lead to the *perpetuation* of population movements (keeping it going once begun), which are totally different from those that lead to the *inception* of migration.[9] Already we are seeing that the increasing number of urban internally displaced persons (IDPs) function as a strong pull factor for others to follow suit. Similarly a growing number of unaccompanied minors who have made it to the West provide incentives for others to continue trying. And last but not least, a slowing refugee return from Iran and Pakistan, capital flight to Dubai and an increase in undocumented migrants working abroad, all are sending signals to the rest of the Afghan population that mobility might once more be the coping strategy with uncertain and insecure times. In 2014, UNHCR acknowledges that changed circumstances in Afghanistan have created a wait and see mentality among the remaining refugee caseload in neighbouring countries until there are "*concrete signs of improved security and economic stability.*"[10]

In light of the above, the question to ask is not '*why we should expect another displacement crisis in Afghanistan,*' rather, '*why not*' and '*what we should do to ease its impact*'? Complexities and uncertainties aside, this much is sure: Afghans have used mobility in the past to spread their risk and are unlikely to stop any time soon; though obviously within their means and possibilities. Thus, what we need to understand better in order to prepare adequate response and assistance, is what the future migration trajectory might be: who is likely to move, for what reasons and where to?

This paper discusses the historical and current displacement trends in Afghanistan and explores how they might shape and impact on future exodus.

It is divided into five sections. The first summarizes the six phases of Afghanistan's displacement past. The second looks at current displacement trends; the third discusses existing migration routes and destinations for future migrants and refugees; the fourth highlights key migrant groups; and the last considers the impact of this renewed population on the country and region.

## 2. Afghanistan's Displacement Past as Key to its Displacement Future

The experience of Afghans with internal and external migration (both voluntary and forced) is vast. In addition to a growing trend of rural to urban migration, the Afghan Diaspora from three decades of conflict is scattered around the world in as many as 75 countries. This already provides ample experience and networks to facilitate further out-migration. Additionally, seasonal migration has been part of the lives

and livelihoods of many rural Afghans for centuries,[11] including Kuchi nomads moving between better pasture lands, mountain and rural people going to cities in the search for jobs and education, religious pilgrimage inside Afghanistan or to Mecca for *hajj* etc.[12]

The onset of conflict in the late 1970s thus only added to a mobile population, a context of traditional migration flow (internal, cross-border, seasonal) and still sizable nomadic and semi-nomadic population (estimated at about 1.5 million) by creating "*one of the world's largest and most protracted refugee situations, the largest volume of returnees in recent history, [and] large-scale internal displacement.*"[13]  Against this backdrop, the hope held by many policy makers - national and international alike - that that the best, most durable solution for Afghans is to return to their areas of origin and to stay put once returned, is highly unrealistic.

Estimates of how many Afghans experienced forced displacement at some point in their lifetime vary across studies, not least because the last official Population and Housing Census was carried out in 1979, just prior to ensuing conflict and mass displacement[14] but also because "*collecting reliable data on Afghanistan is extremely difficult, [and] the information that is available is subject to large margins of uncertainty.*"[15]

Different studies estimate that at minimum of 24% (refugees only),[16] but possibly as many as 42%[17] - or even 76%[18] - of the Afghan population have had internal, external or multiple displacement histories. Given that at the height of the displacement crisis (around 1989/90) 8+ million Afghans were reported displaced by the United Nations' Refugee Agency (UNHCR) –6.3 refugees and about 2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs)– this implies implies that at least half of all Afghans might have some displacement experience. The population then was about 60% of what it is today, which suggests that many displaced families would have had children born into displacement.

The variations in estimates are best explained by the fact that internal migration is often hard to gauge and that not all displacement might be recorded. The widely-acknowledged challenge of distinguishing between various migration caseloads[19] is especially exacerbated in Afghanistan, where the then-UNHCR Representative, Ewen Macleod acknowledged the impossible task of disentangling mixed migration flows: "*Internal displacement patterns are becoming more complex in Afghanistan. In the cities, it is very difficult to distinguish IDPs from poor rural migrants or the urban poor.*"[20]

Regardless of which figure one ultimately arrives at, these estimates are witness to a remarkable mobile population. Moving - in contrast to staying put - is and has been the norm in Afghanistan, with many Afghans having had multiple relocation experiences in their lives (either forced, voluntary or a mix of both). Even if an individual may not have personally migrated, they would know of a relative (or friend) with a migration experience.

Ultimately such experience provides an understanding of the costs and benefits of moving, as well as providing knowledge of migration

**11.** Monsutti 2006
**12.** Hanifi 2000
**13.** *NRVA 2011-12,* p.17
**14.** Ibid, p.9
**15.** Hogg *et al.* 2013, p.ii
**16.** Kronenfeld 2011; he argues that his findings are supported by the number of returnees cited by UNHCR to date (about 6 million) proportional to the estimated population figure of Afghanistan (then 24-28 million).
**17.** *The Cost of War* 2009
**18.** International Committee of the Red Cross 2009
**19.** Koser 2013
**20.** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR from here on] 2010

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

route, established networks abroad, costs of leaving and life in exile. However, the findings by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that Afghans fear displacement (34%) more than losing a loved one (25%) or property (22%)[21] suggests that displacement - though a necessary coping mechanism - has not been an overwhelmingly positive experience.

## 2.1. The Six Displacement Waves

Forced displacement in Afghanistan (at least in this century) has been well documented and studied and is generally associated with six distinct phases, almost always witnessing mixed internal and cross-border movement and several times in both directions - leaving and returning: (see Table 1 and Figure 1 for overview).[22] An understanding of these waves may shed light on future migration trajectories.

| Table 1: Overview of Displacement Phases in Afghanistan by Type of Displacement | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Time Period | Event | Refugee Flow | Internal Displacement | Refugee Return |
| Phase 1 (1978–89) | War of *Mujahidin* against Soviet-backed communist government | Steady flow into neighbouring countries and abroad; refugee figures peak in 1989 | Begin in 1984 (first recorded in 1985) | |
| Phase 2 (1989–95) | Withdrawal of Soviet Army (1989); defeat of Communist Government (1992), ensuing Civil War | Civil war continues to displace people | Continued displacement; peak 1994 | Initial optimistic return slowing by 1994; 2.5 million in 1992 and 1993 alone. |
| Phase 3 (1995–2000) | Taliban enters conflict, takes parts of country in 1995 and Kabul in 1996; harsh Taliban rule follows. | New refugee outflow when honeymoon with Taliban regime abates | Intense drought in 2000 leads to massive internal displacement | Hesitant return trickles though less than a million during the entire Taliban rule. |
| Phase 4 (2001–2) | Post 9/11 bombing and international invasion | Renewed displacement (estimated at 1.5 million) in a short period of time | | Some still returning in 2000 and beginning of 2001 (though negligible) |
| Phase 5 (2002–6) | Peace agreement, transitional authority, new government | Asylum figures begin to drop; some 'refugee recycling' does occur (meaning people leave again after return) | Secondary displacement of returnees and new IDPs; push into big urban cities for services and security | 4.2 million by end of 2005; another million by the end of 2008 |
| Phase 6 (2007-2014) | Government increasingly loose legitimacy, insurgency resurges, violence on the rise | Afghans once more begin to leave, today among biggest refugee and asylum seeker group (latter on rising trend since 2008) | Conflict-induced IDPs steadily on the rise (660,000 by mid-2014); ongoing secondary displacement and rural-urban migration | Return slows after 2008 (a bit over 400,000 2009-13) and realization it was not sustainable total return since 2002 nearly 6 million |

21. International Committee of the Red Cross 2009
22. I am drawing here on my earlier work: Schmeidl and Maley 2008, Schmeidl *et al.* 2010, Schmeidl 2011

**Phase 1 (1978–89)** is typically associated with the Soviet-sponsored Saur (April) Revolution in 1978, which brought to power the Afghan Communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Many Afghans - especially the elites - that were against the regime change and the dominant communist ideology, left the country early only,

initially fleeing to the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran, but also to India (many en route to the West). By 1983, the conflict intensified after *Mujahidin* rebels received increasing international support in order to fight the Afghan government, supported by a growing number of Soviet soldiers. The war was waged largely in rural areas and a mass exodus to neighbouring countries (Iran and Pakistan) created a soaring refugee population upward of 6 million people, with an additional 2 million internally displaced (largely from rural areas into calmer urban centres). The combined figure of 8+ million displaced people suggests that a staggering 43% (nearly half) of the entire Afghan population were displaced at the height of the war (about one-third abroad).

**Phase 2 (1989–95)** commenced with the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989 and was dominated initially by voluntary refugee return. This gained momentum in 1992 following the defeat of the remnants of the Afghan Communist government: (no fewer than 1.2 million Afghans in six months left the country).[23] About 3 million refugees returned to Afghanistan between 1989 and 1993: 2.5 million in 1992/3 alone. This optimism, however, remained short-lived, with different *Mujahidin* factions unable to broker a peaceful power-sharing agreement and locking into intense fighting. This caused a slow in refugee return rates and prompted another displacement wave. While prior displacement largely came from rural areas where the Soviet army had focused their efforts, in-fighting between *Mujahidin* factions brought the war to Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, leading to mass displacement both from and within the city,[24] though likely much of this in-city displacement was never counted and thus is not reflected in official IDP figures. These stayed roughly constant around 1 million for many years.

**23.** Colville 1997, p.6
**24.** Mohmand 2011, p.3



Figure 1: Overview of Afghan Displacement Phases 1979-2013 (UNHCR)

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL
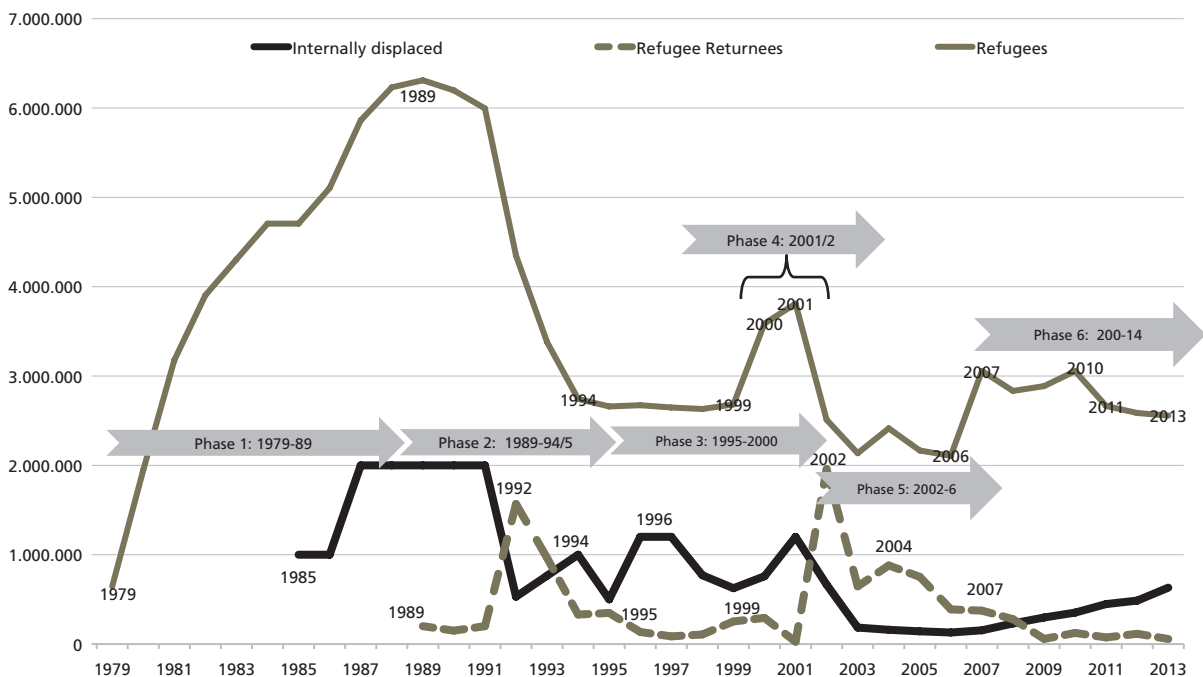
**Phase 3 (1995–2000)** is associated with the Taliban's entrance into the conflict. A war-weary population tired of predatory *Mujahidin* commanders initially welcomed the Taliban's victory in Kandahar in 1995 and Kabul 1996. Migrant return in this period, however, was rather hesitant, being only about 900,000 during the entire Taliban rule. The honeymoon with the new regime was short-lived however, as the Taliban resorted increasingly to brutal authoritarian methods to restore law and order. It continued to ward off challenges by the *Mujahidin* factions, which joined into a loose opposition, the Northern Alliance. The brutal Taliban rule and renewed fighting prompted a new displacement wave, especially among the educated and more liberal Afghans finding it hard to submit to a very strict Shari´a-style government that prohibited girls' education and women's work. Some Afghans sought refuge in northern cities, away from the centres of Taliban rule. Others went abroad, though exit routes became increasingly controlled. Internal displacement soared further in 2000, when the worst drought in thirty years hit Afghanistan,[25] causing massive livestock losses among the nomadic Kuchi population, prompting many to shift to a more sedentary existence - often in Pakistan.

**Phase 4 (2001/2)** witnessed a short, intensive spike in refugee exodus (about 1.5 million) caused by the US-led military invasion into Afghanistan in early October 2001, in response to the 9/11 attacks in the USA. Some fled proactively, in anticipation of another conflict phase, others fled from the actual aerial bombardment and ground combat,[26] and yet others from anti-Pashtun violence in parts of the western and northern Afghanistan.[27] Much of this displacement was external (including from the IDP caseload), though some also fled inside their country.

**Phase 5 (2002-6)** commenced with the defeat of the Taliban, the subsequent Bonn Peace Agreement and transitional government. It witnessed the largest assisted UNHCR refugee repatriation "*in recorded history [...] equivalent to roughly one-half the current refugee population worldwide.*"[28] In total, about 6 million Afghan refugees (around 4.7 assisted by UNHCR)[29] from Pakistan, Iran, and other asylum countries returned home,[30] a majority (4.2 million or 74%) between 2002 and 2005. At the same time, the majority of Afghanistan's 1.2 million internally displaced persons also returned home, widely assumed to have satisfactorily reintegrated.[31] As successful return was needed to demonstrate the political recovery and stabilization of Afghanistan,[32] the creeping internal displacement crisis –among other the result of unsustainable return to areas of origin leading to considerable secondary displacement– was largely ignored.[33]

**Phase 6 (2007-present)** began when return figures continue to steadily decline. Internal displacement was on the rise. While one million still returned between 2006 and 2008, 'only' 427,561 more did so between 2009-13. Though in absolute numbers, this is still a lot, it dwarfs in comparison to previous return - less than 10% of the total return figures.[34] International and national actors have begun to reluctantly wake up to a deteriorating security situation, which impacts on the willingness of refugees to return;[35] and to the

25. Roughly 12 million Afghans are estimated to be affected by the ongoing drought, of which an estimated five million lack access to food and water (Agence France-Presse 2000); The World Food Programme estimated that nearly four million of Afghans are on the brink of starvation due to the severe drought in early 2001 (World Food Programme 2001).

26. An estimated 3–3,400 civilian deaths were attributed to aerial bombardment. Herold 2002; Human Rights Watch 2001

27. The abuses and violence that accompanied the fall of the Taliban have been well documented by Human Rights Watch in the four Northern provinces of Balkh, Faryab, Samangan, and Baghlan. Human Rights Watch 2002

28. Kronenfeld 2011; see Turton and Marsden 2002 and Schmeidl and Maley 2008

29. Natta 2014

30. It is important to note that we might never know how many Afghans exactly returned, as recycling was alleged when it was found that during the first four years of return about half a million more refugees returned to Afghanistan than previously estimated; Kronenfeld 2008). Though the differences in figures might simply be that we underestimated the number of Afghans living in Pakistan to begin with, as many had been living undetected in big urban centers; Kronenfeld 2011, Schmeidl and Maley 2008.

31. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC from here on] 2008

32. Turton and Marsden 2002, Schmeidl and Maley 2008

33. See Schmeidl et al. 2010, IDMC 2010

34. UNHCR 2014a, see also Natta 2014

35. Van Hear et al. 2012

"GOING, GOING ... ONCE AGAIN GONE?"
THE HUMAN CAPITAL OUTFLOW FROM AFGHANISTAN POST 2014 ELECTIONS

fact that refugee return was not as successful and nor as sustainable as initially hoped.[36] Though refugees continue to return, the level of voluntariness is increasingly in question.[37]

In 2008, UNHCR also started to place more attention on profiling internal displacement by drafting the first National IDP Report[38] prompted by a recommendation of Walter Kaelin, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs, who visited Afghanistan in August 2007.[39] By mid-2014, the IDP count had reached nearly 700,000,[40] half displaced since at least 2011, at a rate of about 100,000 per year.[41] Available figures between September 2013 and June 2014 already confirm that this upward trend is likely to continue.[42] In the north alone, "*displacement has increased more than five-fold since 2010 reflecting the spread of conflict across the country.*"[43]

Insecurity is characterized by the fact that the Taleban movement has not been defeated[44] and UNAMA already in 2009 observed that "*the conflict has widened and deepened throughout 2007 and 2008, almost a third of the country is now directly affected by armed conflict, while pockets of armed conflict have started to occur in areas which were formerly relatively tranquil.*"[45] A 2010 a poll by several new agencies reported that fewer than half of all Afghans (47%) felt secure from attacks by Taliban and other armed groups, essentially unchanged from the previous year."[46] In 2013, another opinion poll reported that a majority of all Afghans (59%) stated that they always, often, or sometimes fear for their own safety or that of their family. Furthermore, around three quarters said they feel fear when travelling within the country.[47]  The choices of civilians living in areas that are either contested or under the control of anti-government elements are few: stay and acquiesce, leave to government-controlled major urban areas or be killed.

## 3. Afghanistan's Displacement Present: Understanding the New (Forced) Migrants

This section needs to be read with the caveat that accurately documenting Afghan mobility, little alone into neat categories, is extremely difficult if not impossible.

Though various sources were used to arrive at the final figures, many reports differ widely or are littered with partial and unverified estimates. For example, one study puts the Afghan Diaspora at around 4.5 million[48] in 2007, while another puts it as high as 16 million (though including a vast number of migrant workers).[49]

Another problem is the lack of good documentation, partially because of access problems or a slow realization of the need to do so. It was already suggested by a study in 2010 that official IDP estimates are likely only the tip of the iceberg[50] as they "*are widely recognised to under-represent the scale of displacement as they exclude IDPs in inaccessible rural locations and urban areas.*"[51] In order to improve both its understanding but also its assistance to IDPs, UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Afghan

**36.** UNHCR 2012a
**37.** Hammerstad 2014
**38.** UNHCR, August 2008
**39.** UNHCR, December 2008
**40.** UNHCR, May 2014
**41.** Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC from here on], December 2013
**42.** IDMC, June 2014
**43.** Norwegian Refugee Council [NRC from here on] and IDMC 2012
**44.** Ruttig 2013
**45.** UNAMA 2009
**46.** *Afghanistan – Where Things Stand* 2010, p.7
**47.** The Asia Foundation 2013
**48.** Fitrat 2007
**49.** Afghans Abroad (no date given)
**50.** Schmeidl *et al.* 2010
**51.** NRC/IDMC 2012

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

**111**

Ministry of Refugees and Reintegration have recently started to improve its IDP profiling.[52]

Some of the mystification on numbers is of course definitional, with categorization being at times political, a matter of preference, or at minimum very hard to do.

People's movement generally tend to respond to both push (forcing people to leave their homes) and pull factors (attracting migrants to a destination), making it increasingly difficult to fit migrants into the neat categories policy makers' desire for legal purposes, e.g. refugees vs. economic migrants. For example "*economic factors linked to conflict or natural disasters can frequently trigger displacement. Thus there is often no clear distinction between 'forced' and 'voluntary' movements.*"[53] Sometimes "*migrants can change status or category, often overnight, and sometimes intentionally – for example, in the case of a migrant who knowingly and deliberately overstays a visa, but often because of arbitrary changes in laws or policies on visas or work permits.*"[54] According to one study, this happened with Afghans in Pakistan who changed from refugees into an irregular migration flow, simply because times and migration channels made it more opportune.[55] UNHCR woke up to this predicament in 2006, when "*500,000 more refugees returned to Afghanistan in the first four years of repatriation than we thought to exist in the first place.*"[56]

Last but not least, many Afghans now hold dual nationality (or at least have identity documents of another country) and split their time between Afghanistan and other places, complicating things further. The ultimate lesson here, however, is that people find ways to move if the need arises, simply adapting to changing circumstances and migration policies. Though not all cases of Afghan outmigration are successful as deportations from Iran, Pakistan and Europe exemplify, it often only acts as a minor deterrent if somebody really wants to leave. Anecdotal evidence suggests that being sent back might simply prompt some to try (over and over) again.[57]

In light of the above, the easiest differentiation that still remains is whether or not a person has crossed an internationally recognized border and thus is either an internal or international migrant. Figure 2 (which should be read with care given the problematic nature of existing data) presents an attempt at an overview on how many Afghans can be considered as being 'on the move'. It is important to note here that this includes both voluntary, forced and mixed migration flows, aiming primarily to show migration trajectories and only secondarily to categorize by type of migration.

The final estimates were created triangulating numerous information sources on forced displacement,[58] economic migration (internal and international),[59] and census data from countries hosting the Afghan Diaspora.[60] With the caveat that the figures are best estimates, available information suggests that about 44% of the Afghan population have been (or still are) on the move inside Afghanistan (6.4 million - 49%) or left for abroad (6.7 million - 51%).

52. Koser 2014, for an example see IOM/Samuel Hall Consulting 2014; UNHCR, May 2014
53. IDMC, March 2013
54. Koser 2013
55. van Hear *et al.* 2010, p.28
56. Kronenfeld 2008, p.2
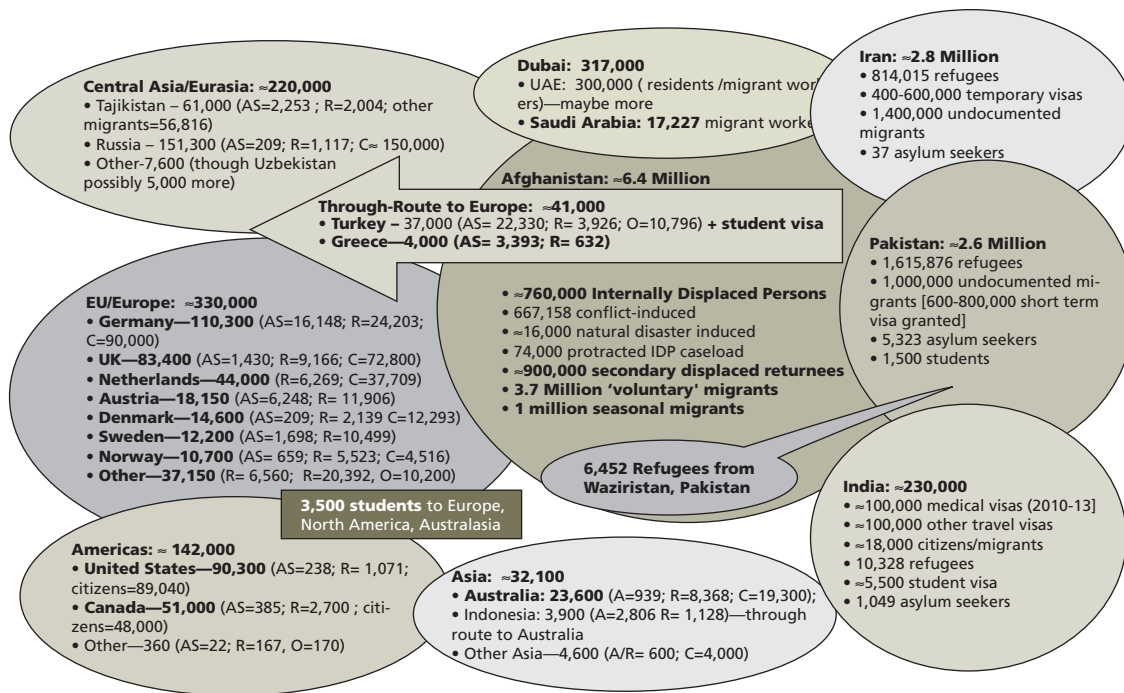57. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit 2014
58. UNHCR 2013, 2014a
59. World Bank 2014, NRVA 2011/12
60. Various – see extra reference section at end

"GOING, GOING ... ONCE AGAIN GONE?"
THE HUMAN CAPITAL OUTFLOW FROM AFGHANISTAN POST 2014 ELECTIONS

**Figure 2: Afghans 'on the Move' ≈13.1 million (≈44% of the total population) Afghans Living and working abroad: ≈6.7 Million -- Afghans displaced inside country: ≈ 6.4 Million**

**Central Asia/Eurasia: ≈220,000**
• Tajikistan – 61,000 (AS=2,253 ; R=2,004; other migrants=56,816)
• Russia – 151,300 (AS=209; R=1,117; C≈ 150,000)
• Other-7,600 (though Uzbekistan possibly 5,000 more)

**Dubai: 317,000**
• UAE: 300,000 ( residents /migrant workers)—maybe more
• **Saudi Arabia: 17,227** migrant worker

**Iran: ≈2.8 Million**
• 814,015 refugees
• 400-600,000 temporary visas
• 1,400,000 undocumented migrants
• 37 asylum seekers

**Afghanistan: ≈6.4 Million**

**Through-Route to Europe: ≈41,000**
• **Turkey** – 37,000 (AS= 22,330; R= 3,926; O=10,796) **+ student visa**
• **Greece—4,000** (AS= 3,393; R= 632)

**Pakistan: ≈2.6 Million**
• 1,615,876 refugees
• 1,000,000 undocumented migrants [600-800,000 short term visa granted]
• 5,323 asylum seekers
• 1,500 students

**EU/Europe: ≈330,000**
• **Germany—110,300** (AS=16,148; R=24,203; C=90,000)
• **UK—83,400** (AS=1,430; R=9,166; C=72,800)
• **Netherlands—44,000** (R=6,269; C=37,709)
• **Austria—18,150** (AS=6,248; R= 11,906)
• **Denmark—14,600** (AS=209; R= 2,139 C=12,293)
• **Sweden—12,200** (AS=1,698; R=10,499)
• **Norway—10,700** (AS= 659; R= 5,523; C=4,516)
• **Other—37,150** (R= 6,560; R=20,392, O=10,200)

• **≈760,000 Internally Displaced Persons**
• 667,158 conflict-induced
• ≈16,000 natural disaster induced
• 74,000 protracted IDP caseload
• **≈900,000 secondary displaced returnees**
• **3.7 Million 'voluntary' migrants**
• **1 million seasonal migrants**

**6,452 Refugees from Waziristan, Pakistan**

**3,500 students** to Europe, North America, Australasia

**India: ≈230,000**
• ≈100,000 medical visas (2010-13]
• ≈100,000 other travel visas
• ≈18,000 citizens/migrants
• 10,328 refugees
• ≈5,500 student visa
• 1,049 asylum seekers

**Americas: ≈ 142,000**
• **United States—90,300** (AS=238; R= 1,071; citizens=89,040)
• **Canada—51,000** (AS=385; R=2,700 ; citizens=48,000)
• Other—360 (AS=22; R=167, O=170)

**Asia: ≈32,100**
• **Australia: 23,600** (A=939; R=8,368; C=19,300);
• Indonesia: 3,900 (A=2,806 R= 1,128)—through route to Australia
• Other Asia—4,600 (A/R= 600; C=4,000)

## 3.1. Internal Displacement: IDPs, Secondary Displaced Returnees, Rural-Urban Migrants

| Cluster | Category | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| Official' IDPs (757,158) | **Conflict-affected IDPs** | 667,158 |
| | **Protracted IDPs caseload mostly in the South** | 74,000 |
| | **Natural disaster-affected IDPs** | 10-16,000 |
| Secondary Displaced Returnees | | 900,000 |
| 'Voluntary' Migration Flows (3.7 Million) | **Rural-urban migrants** | 1,237,000 |
| | **Rural-Rural migration** | 1,161,000 |
| | **Urban-Urban migration** | 957,000 |
| | **(Development-induced) Urban-Rural migration** | 379,000 |
| Seasonal Migration (1 Million) | **Kuchi migration (seasonal)** | 496,000 |
| | **Seasonal labour migration flows** | 530,000 |
| Total | | **»6,414,158** |

### »6.4 million (Including about 1 million seasonal migrants).

A recent IOM report proposed seven different categories of internal displaced populations in Afghanistan acknowledging that many overlapped and providing only partial estimates.[61] Both UNHCR and the Afghan government acknowledge the complexity of clearly identifying IDPs given that they blend with other forms of population movements, such as rural to urban migration and refugee return.[62]

This section builds on these categories, with the exception of victims of human trafficking (people-smuggling), aswhich, at least in comparison

**61.** Koser 2014
**62.** IDMC, March 2013

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

with the other six categories, individual agency seems has no individual decision-making power ("agency") involved. Additionally, estimates were difficult to find: (one source spoke of about 500 individuals[63]). Reducing the seven categories into four broad migration clusters, internal mobility can be seen as roughly comprised of:

i. Officially recognized IDPs
iii. Secondary displaced returnees (at times included in the first category and hard to differentiate from the third)
iii. 'More' voluntary migration: rural-urban, within rural areas (rural-rural), from one city to another (urban-urban), and what IOM calls development-induced migrants (urban to rural)
iv. Seasonal migration (either by Kuchi nomads or labour migrants)

*Cluster 1 encompasses those IDPs falling into the definition* of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*: "*persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border*."[64] This includes conflict-induced IDPs, the largest group in this cluster, 74,000 protracted case-load IDPs from previous displacement phases[65], and around 10-16,000 disaster-induced IDPs, though many do return home the nearly yearly occurrence of this type of displacement warrants counting. In 2014 the flooding in Afghanistan displaced around 14,000 alone.[66]

The other three clusters are a bit harder to disentangle, but in addition to UNHCR or IOM figures the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) by the Central Statistics Organization (CSO) of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA), proves an interesting and underused source to understand mobility in Afghanistan. It reports that in 2011 some 5.1 million Afghans reported having been born outside their district of residence (of which about 900,000 were born abroad),[67] indicating they moved there over the past years. Adding this figure alone to those in Cluster One would already account for an internal mobile population of close to 6 million. But it is best to deconstruct this figure further.

*Cluster 2 includes likely the most controversial category of secondary displaced refugee returnees*, as not everybody fully agrees if they should be seen as part of the IDP caseload or simply as part of greater voluntary migration flows. The International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) observes that "IDP populations are highly mobile and are often forced into secondary or tertiary displacement due to lack of services and jobs, ongoing armed conflict or natural disasters in areas of their primary displacement. Those displaced to urban areas have often been displaced at least once previously."[68] In the end it comes down to the difficult question of when displacement (and the associated protection need) ends. According to the *Guiding Principles* cited earlier, this is only the case if an individual was able to "*return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes or places of habitual residence, or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country.*"[69] Though the Afghan government has made strides on this

**63.** Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission 2011, IOM 2008
**64.** UN OCHA 2004
**65.** Koser 2014
**66.** IOM 2013
**67.** Though it is not designed as a migration survey, The *National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment* (NRVA) conducted multiple survey rounds over the last decade (2003, 2005, 2007-08 and 2011-12) and thus is considered one of the most comprehensive sources of statistical information for Afghanistan. *National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12,* p.9
**68.** IDMC, March 2013
**69.** UN OCHA 2004, Principle 28 (1)

challenge - most recently with the IDP Strategy – all too often it has interpreted "return to area of origin" as the only viable durable solution, leaving those in secondary displacement in limbo.[70]

How many of the approximately 6 million returnees in Afghanistan are in secondary displacement, however, is hard to gauge.  In its 2012 *Solutions Strategy*, UNHCR presented findings of a survey showing that "*up to 60% of returnees are experiencing difficulties rebuilding their lives*;" and acknowledging that "*large numbers of Afghans continue to migrate to cities within Afghanistan or to neighbouring countries, seeking livelihood opportunities. Disenchanted youths returning to communities that lack basic social services and work, see few opportunities for their future.*"[71] Later in the document, however, they settle on a lower estimate of 15% of all returnees to live in secondary displacement mostly to urban areas, which would put them roughly at around 900,000.[72] The figure could be higher, though we may never know for sure.

*Cluster 3 encompasses the vast category of other migrants in Afghanistan.*  The NRVA breaks down estimates that the initial about 5.1 million-figure of Afghans living in areas different to where they were born. Of these, 900,000 were born abroad (hence children of refugees), though there is no way of knowing if they can be counted as secondary displaced or successful reintegrated returnees, so we exclude this figure here (assuming it is counted in Cluster 2), into the following neat categories. When including the first, this comes to about 3.7 so-called 'voluntary' migrants (though again much flow mixed indeed be mixed and caused by a complicated push-pull dynamic, including both economic and security considerations).[73] Of the remaining 4.2 million, another 1 million seasonal migrants is considered under Cluster 3, leaving about 3.7 million internal migrants in this category which can be broken down as follows:

- 900,000 born abroad (hence children of refugees), though there is no way of knowing if they can be counted as secondary displaced or successful reintegrated returnees, so we exclude this figure here.
- 1.24 million rural-urban migrants, which might well include some secondary-displaced returnees, though again there is no way of knowing for sure.  Given the exclusion of the 900,000 individuals born abroad - which incidentally is the same estimates we arrived at for secondary displaced returnees in Cluster 2 – this figure probably holds good
- 1.16 million migrants moving within rural areas (rural-rural migration)
- 957,000 urban residents moving to another city (urban-urban migration)
- 379,000 urban-rural migrants, who could be considered to match the development-induced migration category - those no longer able to afford expensive housing in urban areas (especially Kabul) - suggested in the IOM study.[74]

*Cluster 4 are the roughly million individuals engaged in seasonal migration,* broken down into nearly half a million Kuchi nomads (496,000) and 530,000 seasonal labour migrants. Although both types of migration are temporary, their annual occurrence establishes migration paths, which warrants inclusion. Furthermore, the moment a

**70.** Schmeidl et al. 2010
**71.** UNHCR, September 2012, p.11
**72.** Ibid, p.22 (if UNHCR means 15% of the 4.6 million assisted refugee return not the 6 million total, this figure would decrease to 690,000, already showing the perils confident estimates).
**73.** See World Bank/UNHCR 2011
**74.** Koser 2014

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

shock occurs these seasonal migrants may not be able to return home, which has occurred in the case of the Kuchi nomads who lost their pastures in Maidan Wardak.[75]

## 3.2. Afghan Living and Working Abroad: Following in the Steps of Established Migration Paths

| Category | Estimate |
|---|---|
| Refugees/Asylum Seekers | 2,600,000 |
| Migrants *writ large* | 3,400,000 |
| Diaspora | 530,000 |
| Health/Short-term travels | 200,000 |
| Students | 10,000 |
| **Total** | **6,740,000** |

| Host Nation | Estimate |
|---|---|
| Iran | 2,000,000 |
| Pakistan | 1,000,000 |
| UAE | 300,000 |
| Tajikistan | 56,816 |
| Saudi Arabia | 17,227 |
| Turkey | 10,796 |
| India | 18,000 |
| Total | **3,402,839** |

The *roughly 6.7 million estimated Afghans living or working abroad* is slightly higher, though within the ballpark, of a recent Afghan government estimate quoted in an Afghan news outlet.[76] It also suggests that the current Afghan population abroad is actually larger than at its peak in refugee years: (6.2 million in 1989), though with only about 2.6 million counted by UNHCR as refugees or asylum seekers.[77] The rest - over half (4.1 million or 61%) - includes vast numbers of migrant workers; refugees that have become citizens in their countries of asylum; and those travelling for work (documented and undocumented), education or health care. The fact that the vast category of migrant workers (both documented and undocumented) makes up for 50% of all Afghans abroad suggests that the refugee flows of the past have become an irregular migration flow,[78] simply because times and migration channels made it more opportune.

*Documented and undocumented migration - »3.4 million:* In addition to the combined 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, UNHCR estimates that there are another roughly 3 million Afghans migrant workers living in these two neighbouring countries. This includes about 1 million in Pakistan, of which 600,000 to 800,000 were reported to have received short-term work permits or travel documents.[79] Another 2 million are in Iran, comprised of 1.4 million undocumented migrants[80] and another 400,000 to 600,000 which are reported to be holding temporary working visas.[81] With the construction boom in the Gulf States (the United Arab Emirates having about 300,000[82] and Saudi Arabia about 17,000 Afghan workers), migration to these countries has increased in importance over time, though Iran, together with Pakistan, remains a main destination for now.[83]

75. The Liaison Office 2009
76. Ariana News 2014
77. UNHCR, February 2014
78. Van Hear *et al.* 2010, p.28
79. Koser 2014
80. UNHCR September and November 2013
81. Human Rights Watch 2013
82. Shahbandari 2012; Soufan Group 2014; Malit and Youh 2013
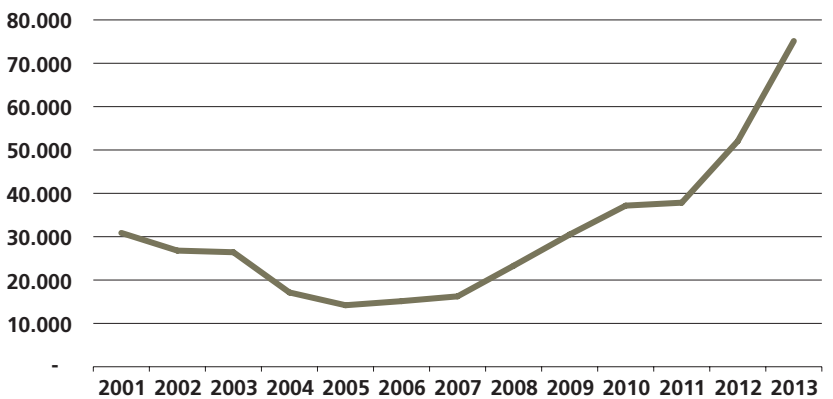83. NRVA *2011-12*

Recently, however, the devaluation of the Iranian currency has made Iran a less attractive option for some Afghans seeking to send home remittance.[84] Smaller numbers of migrant labourers holding resident permits can be found in Tajikistan (57,000), Turkey (11,000) and India (18,000),[85] though there might be additional numbers in other Central Asian Countries.

According to the NRVA, 303,000 individuals aged 14 and older had left their household in 2010 alone,[86] and in a 2008 a UNHCR study reported 60,000 men to be crossing into Pakistan in one month alone.[87] Often migrant labourers stay abroad much longer than a year, and others join them while they are away, suggesting a rising trend as in 2005 the NRVA only reported 61,000 migrant labourers destined to the Arabian Peninsula.[88] "*Permanent migration to the Arabian Peninsula, especially Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, is not possible for foreign workers given their strict immigration laws and regulations. Similarly, it is temporary rather than seasonal migration which is predominant in these countries.*"[89]

*Refugees - »2.6 million:*[90] Despite the efforts over the past years in resolving the protracted displacement puzzle, and staggering return numbers, Afghans (2,556,522 spread across 65 countries) were until June 2014 still the biggest refugee population in post-World War II history, ahead of both Syria and Somalia: (all three countries accounting for more than half of all the world's refugees).[91] Syria, however, has recently been catching up in this macabre race for the top, surpassing Afghanistan in late August 2014 by reaching nearly 3 million.[92] Thus, about one in every five refugees in the world is still from Afghanistan, highlighting the protracted nature of the displacement.

A majority of these refugees still reside in Pakistan and Iran (1.6 million and 814,015 respectively).[93] Some sources, however, put the number of refugees in Iran upward to 1 million registered refugees and the total number of refugees in both countries at 2.6 million,[94] already showing the confusing task of counting displaced populations.[95] Of other countries hosting refugees, those in Europe still lead, ahead of all being Germany (24,203) followed by Austria (11,906), Sweden (10,499), India (10,328), the United Kingdom (9,166) and Australia (8,368).

**Figure 3: Overview of Afghan Asylum Seeker (UNHCR, 2013)**

**84.** Fishstein *et al.* 2013
**85.** Associated Press 2013
**86.** NRVA *2011-12, p.17*
**87.** UNHCR and Altai Consulting 2009
**88.** Wickramasekara and Baruah 2013
**89.** Ibid, p.6
**90.** UNHCR 2014a
**91.** UNHCR, June 2014
**92.** UNHCR, August 2014
**93.** UNHCR 2014b
**94.** UN OHCA 2012
**95.** Schmeidl 2000

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

**Asylum Seekers - » 75,000:** Since 2007, Afghanistan has shown a steady increase in **asylum seekers**, beginning to climb more rapidly post-2011, making it for several years the top asylum-seeker producing country of the world (see Figure 3).
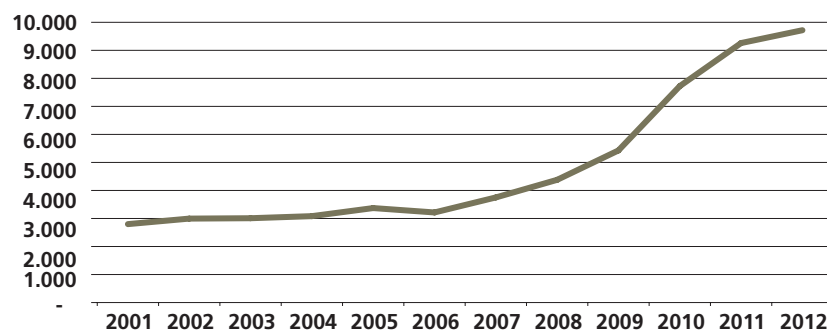
In 2013, however, Afghanistan was ousted from first place by Syria and the Russian Federation, but still counted 75,273 asylum seekers spread across 63 countries.[97] The two top recipient countries in 2013 were Turkey (22,330) and Germany (16,148); with Turkey, and also Greece (3,393) functioning often as "through-routes" to other European destinations. Australia, with its two off-shore sites in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, trails behind with 1,062; with another 3,000 in the two through-route countries of Indonesia (2,806) and Malaysia (138).

**Other migration abroad is mostly for medical reasons and education other than holidaying and visiting relatives) - »200,000:** This includes those seeking for treatment for health care, estimated at around 100,000 in India alone, though anecdotal evidence shows that many also go to Pakistan, and those who can afford it, to Europe or North America.

Currently there are about 10,000 Afghan students studying abroad[98], though this figure might be a conservative estimate with students blurring with other forms of migration. As Figure 4 illustrates, these figures have also increasingly risen over the past several years, and most rapidly since 2008.[99]

Half of all students are estimated to be in India, another 1,500 in Pakistan and the rest in Europe (including Turkey), North American and Australia: (there may also be smaller numbers in Central Asia, such as students attending the American University in Kyrgyzstan).

**Figure 4: Overview of Afghans studying abroad (UNESCO, 2011)**



## 4. Afghanistan's Migration Future – *Quo Vadis*?

Afghanistan's displacement past and present provides enough evidence to outline migration trajectories without having to gaze too deep into the crystal ball.

**96.** UNHCR 2014a
**97.** UNHCR 2013, March 2014
**98.** One source (Times of India 2014) put 10,000 Afghan students into India alone, which would raise this category possibly as high as 15,000 – again showing the problems with attaining accurate estimates.
**99.** UNESCO Institute for Statistic (UIS) 2014

It is unlikely that many new migration destinations (or pathways for that matter) than those already discussed will emerge. This includes a continued push into Afghan cities, flows into neighbouring countries (Iran and Pakistan), as well as the region (Central Asia, India, the Gulf States), and last but not least the West - the coveted destination for many - where the Afghan Diaspora have established themselves over the past years.

Many studies argue that, unlike past displacement phases which were predominantly concentrated outside Afghanistan, Afghanistan's displacement future lies with internal displacement.[100] Though the estimates discussed so far seem to suggest the opposite, or at least a dual growth of internal and international displacement, external obstacles such as border closures might change this in the future. Until then, internal push factors from Afghanistan, linked to the fragile security, political and economic situation will continue to drive both internal as well as cross-border displacement and migration.

First, insecurity, access to services (especially health care and education) and employment in rural areas, as well as challenges in reclaiming land and property, has made major cities in Afghanistan, especially Kabul, a magnet for the internal displaced, who melt into sprawling urban squatter settlements.[101] Secondly, traditional exit options are no longer as attractive as before. In Iran, Afghan refugees face forced deportations, while in Pakistan, refugee camps are being forcibly closed, and refugees face harassment and an increasingly unstable security and political situation.

Furthermore, there is an "*ongoing return bias and the absence of genuine commitments by Iran and Pakistan to a) include alternative stay arrangements for registered refugees as part of the package of durable solution options, b) adequately address the issue of unregistered/undocumented refugee populations and c) provide protection and assistance for vulnerable unregistered Afghan refugees.*"[102] Official third-country resettlement, an option that only exists for Afghan refugees in Pakistan, has also slowed. Given the deteriorating security situation in Pakistan, in 2013 about 900 Afghan refugees filed for asylum abroad, though UNHCR would have to ascertain the eligibility of applicants first through their Refugees Status Determination (RDS).[103] But many Western states are no longer as welcoming to refugees and asylum seekers in general and Afghans might be slotted behind more pressing caseloads from the conflicts in the Middle East.

If destinations are less likely to change, it is more the numbers or types of migration (refugees vs. economic, labour vs. education migration, and so on) which are likely to. As some migration channels close, others may open up, in a constant dance between those wishing to migrate and those wishing to prevent it. Here, the political economy of opportunities in the form of external policies that help shape or hinder migration into a certain direction, but also a migrant's socio-economic status as to where he or she might be able to go, needs to be taken into account.[104] Migration, after all, whether internal or external, has to be paid for and it is often the poorest that stay behind, either in rural areas or inside a country, when out-migration proves too costly. This provides a stratification of who goes where and more importantly who remain, who are often the poorest of the poor.

**100.** Koser 2014, STATT 2013, Schmeidl 2014
**101.** UNHCR, September 2013, p.28
**102.** Tyler 2014, p. 20
**103.** Shah 2014
**104.** Van Hear et al. 2012, p.25

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

## 4.1. Internal Displacement - The Rush to Afghanistan's Cities

The 6.4 million Afghans that have moved within their country are by and large (»60%) rural to urban, with IDPs and other migrants gravitating towards the bigger cities for better security, access to services and livelihoods. Refugees often return straight to Afghanistan's larger cities (Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif) instead of going home, or move at a later point in time when livelihoods or services become unavailable, or security deteriorates. This trend of displaced populations moving into Afghanistan's major urban centres is very likely to continue, especially considering the growing insecurity in many rural areas and an inability of the Afghan government to provide services much outside urban centres. The refusal to accept that IDPs will settle permanently in the Afghan cities, once they left, has been fittingly termed a "*de facto policy of denial*."[105]

Afghanistan´s cities, especially the capital, Kabul, have experienced rapid growth over the past decade, much above the regional average for Asia. Kabul, with an estimated 7.2 million urban dwellers in 2011 (close to 30% of the entire population), is considered to be one of the fastest growing cities in the region,[106] having grown three-fold over the six years from 2001 (1.5 million) to 2007 (4.5 million), with some estimates putting the figure at 7.2 million urban dwellers in 2011.[107]

Other Afghan major cities also attract refugee returnees, IDPs and migrants.[108] For example, already in 2010 a vast gap existed between official and un-official population estimates of Kandahar City, the major urban centre in Afghanistan's south - 507,400 vs. 1.5 million - with the difference largely attributed to urban poor, refugee returnees, settled Kuchi and unregistered IDPs.[109] Similarly, estimates for Jalalabad, Nangarhar (the major regional city in Afghanistan's east), ranged anywhere from 206,500 to 1 million, though the latter is likely closer to the truth, given the extreme urban sprawl.[110]

Many government officials have informally estimated that about 70% of the urban population in Kabul resides in so called 'informal settlements' - slum-like dwellings at the fringes of the city - with similar assumptions being made about other major cities in Afghanistan (especially Kandahar, Herat and Jalalabad).[111]

A majority of the urban displaced (76%) are relatively recent arrivals (post 2002), with over 40% having been displaced for more than five years, making it a protracted displacement situation.[112] Some studies also estimate that a quarter of urban IDPs are returning refugees who end up in secondary displacement.[113] Thus, the major difference between individuals living in urban areas is less whether they have been previously displaced or not, than the duration of displacement and time of arrival.[114]

## 4.2. *"Oh Brother, Where Art Thou*?" Migration Destinations and Enclave Building

It is important not to forget the historical circumstances of a population's migration/displacement history and the interconnectivity it brings to places they may have once travelled to. "*Histories of trans-*

105. Amnesty International 2012 as cited in Roehrs 2013
106. Beall and Esser 2005, p.11
107. Giovacchini 2011, p.4
108. World Bank and UNHCR 2011
109. Schmeidl *et al.* 2010, p.35
110. Giovacchini 2013
111. Communication with Housing, Land & Property Task Force Coordinator, UN-HABITAT Afghanistan, 22 January 2014
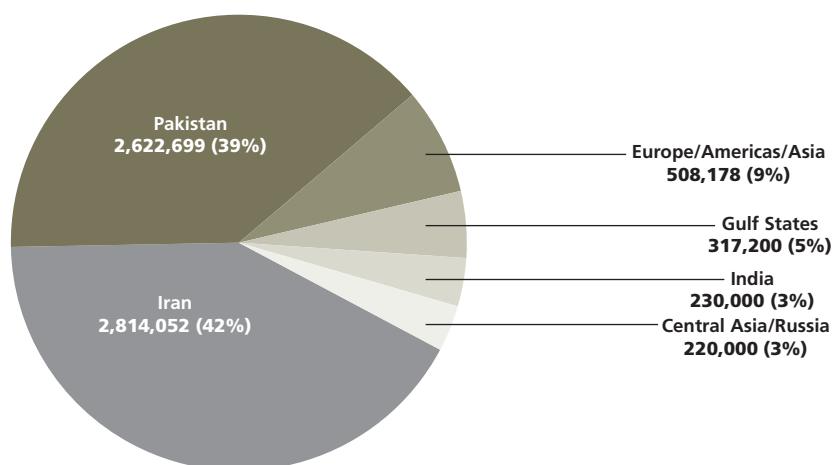112. World Bank and UNHCR 2011, p.20
113. Ibid, IDMC March and December 2013
114. Metcalfe *et al.* 2012

*societal interrelation remind us of how individual actions have often had long-term and distant consequences.*"[115] In migration literature, this is often called "enclave building", which lowers the cost of migration to a specific destination due to existing networks of specific population groups.[116] Furthermore, unless drastic barriers are put up, migration streams to certain enclaves will continue in different modes. For example, those with resources have already begun to move their families to Dubai,[117] or are in the process of setting up doing so. Others may look into study-abroad options, marrying their children off to Afghans in the West, or paying smugglers to get abroad, with Turkey, Indonesia, and Tajikistan being some prominent "through fares". [118]

As Figure 5 illustrates, of the estimated 6.7 million Afghans working and living abroad, a vast majority (over 5.7 million or 84%) are in South Asia (81% in the two neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran and another 3% in India). Another 5% are working and living in the Gulf States, about 3% in Central Asia, leaving only 9% to be found in the wider Diaspora in Europe, North America and Australasia. This is significant if we consider some of the fears of Western countries regarding another great Afghan exodus coming their way. This suggests that while Afghans will continue to move, a majority of their movement will still be within the region.

**Figure 5: Overview of Location of Afghans Abroad (various sources)**



Pakistan
2,622,699 (39%)

Europe/Americas/Asia
508,178 (9%)

Gulf States
317,200 (5%)

India
230,000 (3%)

Central Asia/Russia
220,000 (3%)

Iran
2,814,052 (42%)

### 4.2.1. Destination South Asia: Pakistan, Iran and India

*Pakistan and Iran*

Of the estimated 6.7 million Afghans working and living abroad, a majority (5.4 million or 81%) are found in the two neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran. The fact there are now about 200,000 more Afghans in Iran than Pakistan has reversed a historical trend where the latter bore the displacement burden in the region.

The Afghans in these two countries are divided into refugees/asylum seekers (2.6 million) and migrant workers of semi-legal status (3 million), though number of undocumented migrants is far higher in Iran than in

115. Kresse and Liebau 2013, p.1
116. Monsutti 2005
117. Wigglesworth 2010
118. Hasrat-Nazimi 2013

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

Pakistan (1.4 vs. 1 million respectively). There are also smaller numbers of students in Pakistan - about 1,500 according to one source - with the claim that "*some 31,000 Afghan students have graduated from Pakistani universities, funded under older scholarship schemes or on a self-financing basis, and are now back in their own country.*"[119] It is, however, also likely that several of these students would come from the refugee pool. Furthermore, an unknown number of Afghans travel to Pakistan frequently to see family members or seek medical treatment.

In contrast to Iran, about half of all undocumented migrants in Pakistan have been recently provided with short-term visa, work permits or some other travel documents.[120] Furthermore, according UNHCR spokesperson Adrian Edwards, "*The Government of Pakistan, with UNHCR assistance, has begun issuing new refugee cards to more than 1.6 million registered Afghan refugees. These Proof of Registration cards are valid till the end of 2015.*"[121]

The legal status for Afghans in Iran is far more precarious, with only a little over 800,000 being registered as refugees (asylum seekers are only 37 in number). There are another 400,000 to 600,000 holding temporary visas (many of whom get deported when they expire), while the rest, the vast majority (1.4 million), are undocumented migrant workers.[122]

Among those moving abroad, it is unlikely that Pakistan and Iran will wither dramatically as destination countries, given the numerous facilitating factors at play, regardless of the obstacles of Iran's faltering economy and an increasing negative stance against Afghan refugees in Pakistan.[123] The fact that both countries have hosted Afghans for decades (and hence family ties exist), given that their economies are still greater and with more opportunities than Afghanistan's, and in the light of the inadequacy of health care in Afghanistan, there are enough incentives for migration to continue. Especially as the knowledge of how to avert possible obstacles likely outweighs disincentives the countries may continue to put in place.

Proximity should also not be underestimated as a facilitating factor, either, as both countries can be reached without having to board a plane, with the Afghan-Pakistan border being especially porous and hard to control. Considerable cultural ties (such as religion, ethnic background) between Afghanistan and the two neighbouring countries should also not be underestimated. Last but not least, the pull factor needs mention: "*Both the Iranian and Pakistani economies are also structurally dependent on cheap migrant labour.*"[124]

Then again, both Iran and Pakistan have become less inviting to an Afghan influx than in the early years. Both countries have strongly focused on removing Afghans from their territories over the past years, both through disincentives such as "*restriction on Afghan access to labour markets, even by registered refugee populations*"[125] as well as via direct push factors.

Undocumented migrants are regularly deported from both Iran and Pakistan, though much less from the latter, showing the constant volume of in-flow into these countries despite risks. In 2013, a total

**119.** Khan 2012
**120.** Koser 2014
**121.** UNHR, February 2014
**122.** Human Rights Watch, September 2013
**123.** Koser 2014, STATT 2013
**124.** Van Hear et al. 2012, p.25
**125.** Ibid, p.27-8

"GOING, GOING ... ONCE AGAIN GONE?"
THE HUMAN CAPITAL OUTFLOW FROM AFGHANISTAN POST 2014 ELECTIONS

of 100,033 Afghans were deported from Iran (and another 9,489 from Pakistan).[126] These figures were higher for Iran in 2012 with 258,146 Afghans deported and lower in Pakistan, with 7,114 deported.[127] Pakistan is less open about admitting to deportations than Iran and may use verbal threats over physical removal.[128]

Deportations, however, might only be a nuisance if migrants are still able to re-enter once expelled. One study found that Iran's deportation practise had limited impact on curbing Afghan irregular and illegal migration, mostly because "*the cost and restraints imposed on regularised migration mean that it is both cheaper and easier to risk repeated deportation rather than pay for permits.*"[129] Rather than curbing in-migration, lacking legal migration channels might actually encourage longer or even permanent illegal residency stays on the margins of Iranian society in the future.[130] This means that Afghans simply circulate back into Iran, despite a devaluation of the Iranian currency, in all likelihood because conditions are still better there than in Pakistan (given the deteriorating security situation and increasingly hostile treatment of Afghan refugees).

All this might shift the hosting burden disproportionately toward Iran, as figures already suggest (42% vs. 39% of Afghans in country), reversing the trend of past decades where Pakistan shared most of the Afghan migration burden. With established smuggling channels, Iran will also remain a transit to Turkey and Europe, both directly from the western border and circling around through Pakistan's Balochistan province.[131]

While Pakistan will continue to receive Afghans –especially from its Pashtun ethnic group– it is becoming less attractive as a place for medium-term or permanent residency[132] particularly from non-Pashtuns such as the Hazara Shia and the Hindu/Sikh minorities which are all three treated badly. One should, however, not underestimate the increasing tensions between the two countries, and the deterioration of security in the Pashtun belt, making Pakistan less and less attractive even for (Afghan) Pashtuns.

Even if Pakistan is no longer as attractive as final destination[133], it is important as a main transit country for people to be smuggled to Europe and North America. A 2009 study by the autonomous Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) "*recorded thousands of cases of human trafficking through Quetta from 2005 to 2008, including cases involving Afghans who had set out from Kabul.*"[134] Furthermore, UNHCR still manages its rapid resettlement programme for refugees at risk (e.g., women or minorities) out of Pakistan, making it still the easiest location in the region to apply for on-ward asylum. This, however, might be one of the best-kept secrets, as UNHCR is not allowed to advertise that this programme exists and promotes return as the "preferred" durable solution.[135]

*India*

Albeit hosting far fewer Afghans than Iran and Pakistan, India still receives around 230,000 visitors over the years. Though Afghans have migrated to India in the past, mostly elite en route to Europe, it has started to replace Pakistan and Iran as neighbouring country of choice

**126.** UNHCR, November 2013
**127.** Ibid
**128.** Schmeidl and Maley 2008
**129.** Van Hear et al. 2012, p.27
**130.** Ibid
**131.** STATT 2013, p.15
**132.** Ibid, p.13, Koser 2014
**133.** Voice of America 2012
**134.** Integrated Regional Information Networks [IRIN from here on] 2012, p.14
**135.** Chattha 2013, p.12

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

for those seeking education and health care. For now, a majority of Afghans (87%) still seem to travel to India on a short term basis only, facilitated by accessible visa rules since 2005, especially for medical treatment. According to the Indian Embassy in Kabul, over 100,000 medical visas were issued just since the beginning of 2010 alone, about half the number of total visas for travel to India from Afghanistan in those three years. "*These medical visas are free and do not require applicants to provide financial statements or proof of medical insurance.*"[136]

Smaller numbers include refugees and asylum seekers (about 11,000), residents (18,000; possibly from the Hindu/Sikh minority in Afghanistan) and student visas. According to two independent sources from the Afghan government, the Afghan student numbers in India are estimated at about 5,500, of whom only 300 are women,[137] though one Indian newspaper speaks of 10,000 students.[138] A portion of these students are supported by scholarships provided by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (675 out of a total of 2,325 awarded in total), the largest of any nationality.[139]

Future inflow into India is also prone to continue, in the framework of a Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in 2011,[140] though the Indian government may emphasize facilitation of short-term and educational travels as in the past, and discourage more permanent migration/ refugee in-flows. For now, the Indian government is putting numerous restrictions on refugees and asylum seekers to India, such as not being allowed to work, thereby making the country less attractive for a more permanent relocation.[141]

For some migrants, India also functions as stepping-stone, a chance to study in English so they can go to Europe, the US or Canada for further studies and jobs.[142] This was already practised in the past when elites fled Afghanistan via India and made their way into Europe and North America. "*Many families tell stories of a brother or son who has gone to India to find an illicit path abroad or who is trying another escape plan.*"[143]

### 4.2.2. Destination Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

With an estimated 320,000 Afghans in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, the region almost ties with Europe in the hosting of Afghans. This figure however could be possibly twice as large. One source put the Afghan migrant worker figure in Dubai as high as 600,000,[144] but two other sources put them closer to 300,000.[145] Another study found that Afghan workers in the Gulf countries often hold fake Pakistani passports,[146] and given there are about 950,000 Pakistani estimated to work in the UAE in 2013,[147] the 600,000 estimate of Afghan workers sounds at least plausible. The UAE tends not to be forthcoming in sharing labour migration statistics, and much of the migration is either illegal or falls under the heavily criticized *kafala* system, which allows Gulf countries to skirt counting them under official labour migration statistics.[148]

All but 17,227 of these Afghans are said to live and work in the United Arab Emirates, and are a mix of migrant workers (likely the

136. Bearak 2013
137. Khan 2012; Das, 3 June 2013
138. Times of India 2014
139. Das 2013
140. Times of India 2014
141. Associated Press 2013
142. Deutsche Welle 2011
143. Bowley 2013
144. Afghans Abroad (no date provided)
145. Shahbandari 2012; Soufan Group 2014; Malit and Youh 2013
146. Overfeld and Zumot 2010
147. Malit and Youh 2013
148. Human Rights Watch 2013

vast majority) and wealthy Afghans (either businessmen or middle-class Afghans with a background in working for international or non-governmental organizations) holding residency in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.[149] If one 'follows the money', then Afghan migration to Dubai will continue in the future. In 2011/12, reportedly *"$4.6 billion fled [Afghanistan to Dubai] via the airport, a sum equal to almost one-quarter of the country's gross domestic product. The year before, $2.3 billion in cash left via the airport."*[150]

### 4.2.3. Destination West: Europe, North America and Australasia

For many Afghans, the west is often still the most coveted destination, for education, health care, but above all as a long-term destination. This is why smugglers have specialized on these routes[151] and Afghan families often pool funds into financing the smuggling of one young man (often under the age of 18) to make it the West, with the hope for reunifications later. Part of the attraction to the West is the already extensive Afghan enclaves which exist in these countries.

*Europe*

There are currently about 330,000 Afghans living and working in Europe, with a majority (59%) found in Germany (34%) and the UK (25%), followed by the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway (30%); and with a further 11% in about 25 other countries. If one adds the through-routes of Turkey and Greece to the figures for Europe, the total jumps to 370,000. Turkey in particular has seen a rising influx of Afghan asylum seekers hoping to make it to Europe (about 26,000 in 2013).

The bulk of Afghans living in Europe now are naturalized citizens, with 37% still counted as refugees and asylum seekers: (41% if one was to include Turkey and Greece). This opens the route for entry through marriage visas and family reunification. Though figures are hard to obtain, anecdotal evidence and observations by the author suggest that the trend is at least on the rise over the past 6-7 years.[152] One study found that "*family reunification is one of the most common ways to immigrate to Europe today. This means that immigration laws in host countries have transformed immigrant youth into virtual human visas ... giving families incentives to use marriage to work around the European immigration system.*"[153]

Furthermore, over the past year, Europe has once more become "*the destination for a large number of Afghan asylum-seekers, some coming directly from Afghanistan, while many arrive in Europe after stays in the Islamic Republic of Iran or Pakistan;*"[154] many being under-age unaccompanied boys.[155] Often times this requires the work of smugglers and comes at quite some cost. According to one study, "*Afghans who can afford to do so will pay as much asup to $24,000 for European travel documents and as much as $40,000 for Canadian ones, with visas to the United States, are generally not for sale.*" Some migrants, the study continues, "*employ smugglers for arduous overland treks from Iran to Turkey to Greece, or from Russia to Belarus to Poland.*"[156]

149. Shahbandari 2012; Soufan Group 2014; Malit and Youh 2013
150. Najafizada 2012
151. Mogelson 2013, AREU 2014
152. Though always an occurrence, I have heard of an increasing number of colleagues or their friends and family members marrying Afghans from abroad, most with the clear intention to immigrate once the marriage visa was obtained. Not all come from the middle class, and I have also seen some occurrences of refugees returning from Europe to marry locally.
153. Ben-David 2009
154. UNHCR 2014c; Mougne 2010
155. Mougne 2010, IRIN 2010 and 2013
156. Mogelson 2013

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

Although, exact numbers are difficult to provide,[157] the European Commission has observed a rising trend in unaccompanied minors arriving in the European Union (12,225 in 2011; 10,845 in 2010; 12,245 in 2009 and 11,715 in 2008), at least 40-50% being from Afghanistan.[158] UNHCR also observed a rising trend, with 21,300 recorded in 2012 (also including Somali youth; the highest since UNHCR started counting).[159]

Not all make it, however. One study reported that *1,500 Afghan nationals were refused entry to the European Union between 2008 and 2011, the majority turned-back along Italy's border.*[160] Furthermore, the smuggling carries an added concern of bondage as outcome. Increasing numbers of men, women, and children in Afghanistan pay intermediaries to assist them in finding employment in Iran, Pakistan, India, Europe, or North America; some of these intermediaries force Afghan citizens into labor or prostitution after their arrival.[161]

### Turkey

Turkey is considered another major through-route for Afghan migrants aiming to reach Europe, with Afghan smugglers established there to aide on-travel.[162] Others simply try to reach Turkey (or Greece) as entrance into Europe for seeking asylum in other countries. "In recent years, Iraqi and Afghan refugees crossed several European states in order to claim asylum in Sweden and Norway, countries which have more liberal asylum laws."[163]

Turkey, however, might be soon more than simply a transit point. There are already an increasing number of Afghans studying in Turkey, and in 2009, the Afghan government announced its plan to increase its student scholarship to Turkey and India to 1,000 students (allocating USD 10 million).[164] Furthermore, some Afghans might look to Turkey as a cheaper alternative to Dubai, as well as one that is easier to reach than Europe and North America. Sales of Turkish property to overseas buyers soared in 2013, after legal changes that make it easier for foreigners to own property and offered them the possibility of securing residency. The Turkish government did not respond to a request by a journalist for details of property purchases by Afghans, but was told by people familiar with the matter that "*there has been a significant uptick in buying – including by dozens of prominent people inside and outside government.*"[165]

### North America and Australasia

These farther-off destinations are the home of nearly 200,000 Afghans; with a majority living in North America (140,000). Within North America, the United States is host to the largest diaspora some putting the US figures at par with Europe.[166] This 300,000 estimate of Afghans living in the US, however, seems more of a self-estimate by the Afghan community as official figures from UNHCR and census would put the number much closer to 90,000.[167] Another 50,000 Afghans are found in Canada, and a negligible number of refugees and asylum seekers is scattered across various Latin/South American countries.

Aside from a few thousand student visas (though breakdowns of the 3,500 students studying in Europe, North America and Australia were not found), there are relatively few refugees and asylum seekers (less than 5,000), with a majority of Afghans being naturalized citizens by

157. European Commission 2012
158. Ibid
159. UNHCR, June 2013
160. Siegel 2013
161. U.S. Department of State 2013
162. Conversation with researcher who had interviewed Afghan smuggler in Turkey, April 2014
163. Ben-David 2009
164. ICEF Monitor, 9 April 2012
165. Peel 2014
166. Koser 2014
167. U.S. Census Bureau 2011, UNHCR 2014b

"GOING, GOING ... ONCE AGAIN GONE?"
THE HUMAN CAPITAL OUTFLOW FROM AFGHANISTAN POST 2014 ELECTIONS

now. As in Europe, this opens the route of marriage immigration and educational scholarships such as the Fulbright programme to the United States. Many scholarship programmes specifically target women as well.[168]

*Asia*

Last but not least, not counting the few Afghans scattered in Africa, the last geographic region hosting Afghans is Asia (32,000), two-thirds living in Australia, followed by Indonesia (also seen as through-route to Australia) and New Zealand. Again, those who managed to obtain citizenship (73%) far outnumber refugees, asylum seekers and students.

Australia is ahead of all countries in aggressively trying to curb the arrival of what they deem to be illegal migrants via boats. This includes third country processing for asylum seekers who arrive by boat (May 2013) and third country settlement (the Pacific Solution), with the promise not to settle any person who arrives to Australia via boat.[169] This came after more Afghan asylum seekers had arrived by boat in 2013 than 2011 (4,243 vs. 1,601 Afghans respectively).[170]

These obstacles, however, might not mean that Afghan migration to Australia will be lower, as Afghans may simply try for more formal channels such as student scholarships, marriage visas or formal resettlement programmes, instead.

### 4. 2. 4. Destination Central Asia

After the Gulf States, estimates of Afghans living in the general of Central Asian/Eurasian/Caucasus were the second most difficult to find.

While one source suggested that as many as 150,000 live in Russia, another put this figure for all of Central Asia/Russia.[171] Of the 220,000 estimated to live and work in the region, a majority (68% or 151,300)[172] can be found in the Russian Federation and Tajikistan (28% or 61,000)[173], with the rest (around 7,000) living in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states. Those in Russia are by and large naturalized former refugees, while in the other Central Asia states they include refugees, asylum seekers (likely in the waiting to move onward to Europe or North America), illegal migrants, as well as some businessmen and students.

Although Afghans have flocked to Tajikistan in the past, and it is likely the easiest Central Asian country to enter from Afghanistan, it is not clear this trend will continue. Generally, the significant number of businessmen, few thousands of refugees, and few students are treated badly by the Tajik government and population alike, despite sharing the same ethnic background, mostly because it is resented that Afghans might have a ticket out as asylum seekers, an opportunity not open to many Tajiks.[174] Similar attitudes prevail in other Central Asian nations, such as Uzbekistan who views Afghans as uneducated and linked to crime and drug trafficking. Notwithstanding these obstacles, some migration will certainly continue –especially as transit route from Afghanistan to Russia and Europe[175]–though it is unlikely numbers will increase.

168. https://www.facebook.com/Kab-ulEducationUSA/notes
169. Australian Human Rights Commission [no date provided]
170. Koser 2014, p.19
171. Fitrat 2007
172. Ferris-Rotman 2011
173. World Bank 2014
174. Bleuer and Kazemi 2014, p.28
175. STATT 2013, p.15

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

## 5. Meet the Afghan 'Migrants'

Displacement scholars have long observed roughly three basic waves of forced migration.

The first (or anticipatory migrants) tend to be elites, the second are mostly male urban dwellers and only the very last wave consists of a mix of people caught in the cross-fire of rapidly unfolding political violence, often including large numbers of women and children.[176] The first two migration categories are a form of preventative displacement (hence often put into the voluntary category) while the last is more clearly in direct responses to threat. Estimates are easier to find for the last category of displacement, because it seems to fall much better into existing definitions of what IDPs and/or refugees should look like. Furthermore, the latter are more often than not bigger groups of people, such as families, while the preventive form of displacement is by and large limited to individuals—in Afghanistan disproportionately men.

At present, one could argue Afghanistan is observing the first two migration flows (though only partially as refugee migration) for those seeking better lives and livelihoods abroad, with elites moving their families to Dubai, politically astute Afghans going abroad for studies with the potential to stay on. A third option is to arrange marriages between exile Afghans with nationality of the host country to those from Afghanistan. The latter is facilitated by a rather large Afghan refugee population abroad.

The second wave could be viewed as consisting of the many irregular labour migrants identified – and available estimates are clear, they are largely young men. The more mass wave is at present mostly observed inside Afghanistan, when families pick up and flee insecurity and violence and seek safe refuge in the bigger cities. This already shows that internal migration is more advanced than international one or that cross-border migration has simply become more difficult than in past decades.

Even though much of this irregular migration might still be circular - "*temporary movements of a repetitive character either formally or informally across borders, usually for work, involving the same migrants. [… or when] the diaspora in destination countries, engage in back and forth movements*"[177] - it could become more permanent if conditions in Afghanistan deteriorate. Furthermore it is worth remembering that migration to Iran and Pakistan is often seen as a stepping-stone to other destinations, such as migrants from Faryab province wishing to secure enough funds in Iran for smuggling to Turkey and onwards to Europe.[178]

The following general categories by no means cover all Afghan migrants, but they are nevertheless the groups that are already on the move or are very prone to become so. Policymakers wishing to address outmigration would need to address the needs of these specific groups.

**176.** Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez 2002, Ferris 1987
**177.** Wickramasekara 2011, p. 1
**178.** The Liaison Office 2014

**Young Men - The Vanguard of Afghan Migrants:** One of the largest migrant categories in Afghanistan is young men from all ethnic groups, educational background and walks of life. The more educated will be the ones studying abroad, either in countries in the region or

the west. The less educated join the troves of migrant workers with destinations in Pakistan, Iran and the GCCs.[179] Those from families who can afford it will engage smugglers to bring them to western shores. Most of the unaccompanied child migrants pushing into Europe are also boys. Lastly, many men may leave their families in asylum countries (such as Pakistan) and return to Afghanistan to work or move them Dubai while commuting to Kabul. Even in some informal settlements, men might either arrive alone or families move into a settlement, while a male family member stays behind to tend land or to work (including fighting with armed groups).

A specific group of predominantly male out-migrants is that of Afghan interpreters who had worked with international military forces. Many NATO member states, such as the US, UK, Australia and Germany have such special visa programmes, and often it is the entire nuclear family of the Afghan interpreter that is able to migrate, though there are also complaints of visas being denied and delayed.[180]  Numbers vary, though some speak of several hundred to possibly a few thousands (especially if family member are counted in).

A key reason why Afghan men disproportionately make up external migrants is that culturally women's movement is still far more restricted than that of men. Women often are not allowed to venture into the public sphere without being accompanied by a male chaperone (*mahram*). As honour plays a big role in Afghan culture, women are thus seen as being protected by being kept at home.[181]

**Middle and Upper Classes - Those Who Can Afford to Move.** Mobility needs to be first and foremost affordable. This disproportionately favours those that have the means to pick up and leave, or who as a family are able to pool funds to send at least one young man abroad.  One author observes that "*the richest Afghans already have second homes abroad and can leave if security worsens.*"[182]

Labour migration aside, where young (poor) men dominate, migrants often come from better-off families. This is especially true for those seeking to arrive abroad.[183] The correction between the socio-economic status and distance travelled stratifies migration, given the ability of the wealthiest migrants to travel out of the region and towards greater opportunities.[184]

Many Afghan elites (old and new) as well as those from a middle class that were able to benefit from the international engagement (and the employment that came with it) have begun to buy property in Dubai or Turkey.[185] This is once again a way to spread risk or hedge bets, given the current unfavourable political, security and economic climate in Afghanistan. For instance, "*as of early January 2014, the continued transfer of capital by Afghanistan's elites to the UAE points to persistent uncertainty among them about their country's future as US and allies prepare for draw down post-2014.*"[186]

**Educated Elite and Professionals - Those With Skills to Sell.** Another migration category are those with the education and skills that can provide them with better employment. Currently in Afghanistan, professionals are extremely underpaid. For example, university professors

**179.** *NRVA* 2011-12
**180.** Zucchino 2014
**181.** Beath *et al.* 2012
**182.** Bowley 2013
**183.** Hossaini 2013
**184.** Van Hear et al. 2012, p.25
**185.** Peel 2014, Najafizada 2012, Soufan Group 2014
**186.** Soufan Group 2014

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

make less than $2 per hour in Afghanistan, and licensed physicians make about $100 a month working in a government hospital.[187] Others are simply accustomed to obtaining a certain compensation for work rendered, and are having difficulty adjusting to lower wages that come with transition, especially in the development industry.[188] A final group may simply not wish to live in an Afghanistan where they feel that progressive thinkers and moderates are discriminated against. As one person put it: "*Educated people can't live in this country, only the mafia and warlords. You pay a high price when you are in constant fear for your life and that of your husband and children.*"[189]

The past decade has created a skilled labour force working in international and national (non-governmental) organizations, which the Afghan Ministry of Economy estimates as high as 50,000 skilled Afghans.[190] Many already struggle to find employment or are taking pay-cuts into account. Others have looked into education abroad, while yet others are considering more permanent relocation. The French consulate in Afghanistan, for example, stated that [in 2012] demand was up for visas from all EU countries that have missions in Afghanistan.[191]

Another group are educated Afghans who returned home either under the IOM skilled return programme or on their own volition, to take up jobs in the development industry or with Afghan government ministries. While Afghan government officials are generally paid only a few hundred US$, the World Bank and donor schemes have supplemented salaries or paid advisors extremely well. Estimates vary widely, with some speaking of about 5,000 government staff "*whose salaries are paid by foreign money*"[192] while other cite World Bank statistics [of] 106,000 Afghans working in key ministries are paid through donor funds.[193] Many are unlikely willing to remain on regular government salaries, especially if they are able to go back 'home' to the West to similarly well paid employment.

**Women - Those With the Most to Lose.**  Though it was noted earlier that men disproportionately make up Afghanistan's migrants, young women (especially if educated and coming from more liberal urban families) are also beginning to make their way abroad, for education, health care, and at times to leave altogether. There are fears that especially educated urban women, with the most to lose if rights regress, have started to look towards leaving for the West.[194] Although figures will likely be lower than those for men, an outmigration of outspoken women can bring setbacks for Afghanistan´s development as a society and an economy.

Women wishing to access education or jobs already are increasingly leaving rural areas to move to cities. Others are planning to do so, especially if the Taliban were to return.  Many do not wish to once again have their rights severely restricted - once being more than enough.[195] Womens' outmigration is facilitated by specialized targeted educational scholarship programmes as well as by UNHCR's rapid resettlement for groups at risk (and women are more often than not put into this category).

**The Young and the Restless - Those With the Greatest Aspirations.**  Although this category overlaps with others, it does deserve a special mention. 67% of the estimated 30 million Afghans

**187.** Hasrat-Nazimi 2013
**188.** Carberry 2012
**189.** Hasrat-Nazimi 2013
**190.** Carberry 2012
**191.** Agence France-Presse 2012
**192.** Bowley 2013
**193.** Carberry 2012
**194.** McVeigh 2012, Hasrat-Nazimi 2013

are under the age of 25, and youth also dominate in the key internal migration destination: Afghan cities.[196] This suggests that young adults (15-24) tend to be drawn to urban centres regardless of their families' residence.

Young adults in Afghanistan have already grown up with a collective unease; worrying that the coming decade will mirror the last. The hope in the early years of the Karzai administration has increasingly diminished, after all for many adolescents most of their young lives, things have not improved enough and there is no promising outlook in the next few years. Especially for those from more progressive families already in urban areas, and with a certain education level, the feeling is increasingly that their future lies elsewhere - even if just temporarily - as living in Afghanistan is effectively living without a future.[197] Afghanistan's intelligentsia is growing fast in tandem with a 'youth bulge' in which young people are a high proportion of the overall population. It is also expanding in a tenuous and uncertain social and political environment, with limited prospects for socio-economic and political integration and mobility.[198]

## 6. The Impact on Afghanistan and Its Neighbours

There are several internal outcomes that can be expected from the current displacement, two of which are already in motion: first, over-urbanization and slum-development in the Afghan cities and secondly, brain-drain of an educated and younger generation. Together they create a potential toxic mix, where young educated individuals (predominantly men) in cities are replaced by young uneducated and unemployed individuals. If this toxic mix is unaddressed, it can leads to third negative impact: rising crime. Some, however, argue that out-migration is not all negative, as migrants might return with a better education and skills to help their country and/or send remittances back home helping to keep poverty at bay.

The main external outcome to be expected is that especially countries in the region will continue to have to bear the Afghan migration burden. While the economies of some countries will benefit from cheap labour (e.g., Pakistan and Iran) and others welcome the money that comes with elite migrants (such as Dubai, but also India in terms of medical treatment), not all will view increased Afghan out-migration as positive, especially those fearing that Afghans bring with them crime and terrorist potential.

### 6.1. Urban Sprawl and Growing Urban Poverty

As highlighted earlier, the last decade has already witnessed rapid urban growth in Afghanistan, driven by rapid population growth, large-scale refugee return into urban areas due to lacking livelihoods and services in rural areas as well as growing insecurity pushing people into the city in search for security and access to services. Ahead of all is Afghanistan's capital Kabul, which has witnessed a population explosion from around 1.5 million in 2001[199] to the present estimated 7.2 million today.[200] A 2013 article cited the Mayor of Kabul as planning for a city of 8 million.[201]

[195.] Conversation with Teacher from Paktia, 2012
[196.] *NRVA 2011-12*
[197.] Latifi 2013
[198.] Ibrahimi 2014, p.2
[199.] Beall and Esser 2005
[200.] Giovacchini 2011, p.4
[201.] Bowley 2013

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

The minority in this urban sprawl, however, are educated and well-off elites. There are estimates that informal settlements where IDPs, refugee returnees, and impoverished rural-urban migrants mix, account for as much as 70% of Kabul and many other large Afghan cities.[202]

Few cities, if any, could cope with such rapid growth, especially if the economic situation of incoming migrants is not contributing to urban economic growth. Rapid in-migration has been testing the absorption capacity of major Afghan cities as service delivery and government policy –as elsewhere in the developing world– has not yet caught up with the challenges of growing urban poverty, forcing urban poor populations to struggle with poor basic services (water/sanitation, electricity, health care and education), lacking access to land and housing, as well as under- or unemployment in addition to food insecurity.[203]

Studies show that those living in informal settlements (especially with a displacement background) have a much higher illiteracy rate and lower school enrolment levels, lower household incomes, higher unemployment rates and high food insecurity.[204] Despite the high unemployment rate, or possibly also because of it, child labour is common, with boys as young as 6 years of age collecting trash and/or polishing shoes for money.[205] This puts children at risk and keeps them from attending school. Furthermore, while poverty rates are higher in rural areas food security is worse inside the urban centres (34% vs. 29% in rural areas).[206]

Furthermore, a study found that young women in informal settlements are having their rights infringed more than when they were in their place of origin, although generally women in urban areas have greater mobility than elsewhere.[207] This, however, did not account for the loss of protective networks that women have in rural areas, nor for the forms of seclusion men put onto women, when they are unsure of how to best protect them. Added to this is that poor, unemployed and frustrated men frequently resort to domestic violence and negative coping mechanisms, including saving on medical care by not treating female family members.

### 6.2. Brain-Drain vs. Brain Gain and the Importance of Remittances

Although Afghanistan is not yet one of the countries with a greater proportion of the high-skilled labour force living abroad than at home, at 30%, it is well on its way.[208] The fear of brain drain has been one of the main human impacts associated with the 2014 security transition in Afghanistan,[209] though it was already raised in media as early as 2006.[210]

One report argues that already two years ago, more Afghans were leaving the country than returning to it[211] reversing the much applauded massive refugee return of earlier years. The loss of an a educated elite - a mix of those that returned post 2001 or came to age during this time and benefitted from better education and skill-building opportunities - has been described as potentially depriving

202. Koser 2014, Bowley 2013
203. Majidi 2011
204. NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS 2012, World Bank and UNHCR 2011
205. Schmeidl *et al.* 2010
206. *NRVA* 2011-12
207. Tyler and Schmeidl 2014
208. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD from hereon] 2012, p.94
209. Hasrat-Nazimi 2013
210. Younossi 2006
211. Agence France-Presse 2012
212. Carberry 2012

Afghanistan of "*a critical building block.*"[212]  Indeed, one report argues that "*experts agree that the increasing number of educated workers, scholars and artists leaving Afghanistan poses a threat to the country's development. [...] You can compare the loss of a country's academic and cultural strength with a car that has no driver.*"[213]

Not all brain-drain, however, needs to be seen as negative and the literature has recently tried to reformulate the positive impact of out-migration on a country's development. One source goes as far as arguing that "*some Afghan emigrés actually contribute more to Afghanistan's social and economic development by working abroad than they could do at home.*"[214] Afghans abroad might also form an effective lobby for continued attention and assistance to their country in the years to come. Another study, while acknowledging that "*the emigration of young men has caused long-term problems for the reconstruction*" of the country, still concludes that "*it is nevertheless a survival strategy that has proven effective.*"[215] How effective this long-term survival strategy will be, however, remains to be seen.

First, out-migration can help bring advancements in education, given the current poor status of higher education in Afghanistan.[216] If those who study abroad return home, they come back with more knowledge than they left bring back, bringing useful skills that cannot be obtained at home.

Secondly, there is remittance flow to be considered, though here literature is somewhat divided as to whether this is positive or negative for a country's economy.[217] Some point to a wider benefit to the local economy, given there is multiplier effects of spending that comes from the household receiving remittances.[218] Others value "*businesses that trade with Afghan companies or employ Afghan workers.*"[219]

Some, however, warn that remittances can perpetuate existing social inequalities: like remittances from economic migrants, transfers from refugees in the wider diaspora are selective in their benefits, because such refugees tend to come from the better-off households among those displaced and to send money to those better-off households. Furthermore, the distribution is likely to have become still more skewed in recent years because of the rising costs associated with migration: long distance, intercontinental mobility is increasingly the preserve of those who can afford to pay migration agents' inflated fees.[220]

Generally it is difficult to obtain accurate data on remittances[221] and those available for Afghanistan are limited, showing no consistent trend.

Part of the problem is that (as noted earlier) some countries where Afghans reside, such as the United Arab Emirates, do not share data. However, neither does the Afghan government report incoming remittances, to either the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.[222] The World Bank, however, does try to make estimates with information available to them,[223] taking into account that the current state of disruption and uncertainty in financial services in Afghanistan[224] makes available estimates incomplete, possibly only the tip of the iceberg.

**213.** Hasrat-Nazimi 2013
**214.** Azimi 2012
**215.** Monsutti 2012
**216.** Ibrahimi 2014
**217.** Monsutti 2012
**218.** Katseli *et al.* 2006, p.9
**219.** Azimi 2012
**220.** Van Hear 2003
**221.** Siegel *et al.* 2010, p.32
**222.** Siegel 2013
**223.** World Bank 2010 and 2014
**224.** Siegel *et al.* 2010

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

**133**

This information that does exist tells us that in contrast to other countries in South Asia, where remittances have been of rising importance over the past years, Afghanistan on average receives lower amounts of remittances than other countries, both in total volume but also *per capita* (based on the receiving population, not the sending one) with Bangladesh, Pakistan and India far ahead of others. A World Bank estimates suggests that only about 15% of rural households in Afghanistan receive remittances from abroad, covering around 20% of the family's daily expenditure.[225]

Although remittance are sent by people from the diasporas, as well as labour migrants, studies suggest that temporary migration tends to be more conducive to higher remittance flows than permanent settlement to the host country, especially when it involves low-skilled migrants, not accompanied by family members, who expect to return to their country of origin.[226] This might simply be because of the larger number of labour migrants abroad, as it is in the case of Afghanistan. Some country policies might also restrict working, and hence remittance-generation, such as India, where Afghans don't have work permits. Many have trouble enrolling their children in school, or cannot obtain a local phone.[227]

Remittance data further shows that, although Iran accounts for the lion's share (66%) of the estimated 445 million remittances that arrived in Afghanistan in 2012, it is also the country that hosts most Afghan migrants, bringing the *per capita* remittance sent down to about US$ 113. In contrast, Switzerland's Afghan Diaspora, which contributed less than 1% to overall remittances, provides the highest per capita remittance flow (US$ 311). These calculations, however, are difficult to make, as not every Afghan abroad sends remittances home.

None the less, remittance flow to Afghanistan might not yet have reached its fullest potential. Only in more recent years did Western Union establish strategic alliances with Roshan in Afghanistan "*to allow senders to remit funds directly to a recipient's mobile wallet from any of Western Union's agent locations worldwide*".[228] In contrast to other countries in the region, however, it is very unlikely that remittances are exceeding official development assistance in Afghanistan.[229] In neighbouring Tajikistan, for example, "*new statistics show migrant labor remittances are now equivalent to over half Tajikistan's GDP, crossing an important psychological threshold and emphasizing the Central Asian country's vulnerability to external shocks.*"[230]

Nevertheless, for a country with little other income-generating opportunities, remittances can still play a role. A study for the Dutch government found that as of 2005, "*remittances were Afghanistan's third major source of externally-generated income behind opium production and trafficking and unregulated trade of legitimate goods; accounting for up to 3% of new investments that year.*"[231] With international assistance declining and more Afghans moving abroad, remittances may still come to play an important part in supporting the Afghan economy.

225. Siegel 2013
226. Katseli *et al.* 2006, p.9
227. Associated Press 2013
228. UNCTAD 2012, p.76
229. World Bank 2014
230. Trilling 2014
231. Siegel *et al.* 2010, p.32

## 6.3. Generation "XYZ" – The Feared Youth Bulge, Migration-Security Nexus

Youth can be both a positive and negative force, as recent world history has shown with youth-instigated riots, uprisings and revolutions as part of the 'Arab Spring'. More often than not, however, youth, and also the migration of young men in particular, has been linked to crime, instability and also terrorism. One only needs to look at the discourse regarding foreign fighters with the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Unsurprising, there has also been a general discourse both in Iran and Pakistan that explains their increasing resistance to host more Afghan refugees, by blaming them for crime, insecurity and instability.[232] The Iranian government has even made a tenuous link between Afghan migrants and the drug trade.[233]

Pakistan has recently turned up the heat on refugees with a local news outlet reporting "*that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police prepared a list of four thousand Afghan refugees allegedly involved in serious crimes*"; including terrorism.[234] Central Asian countries fear spill-over conflict and the export of terrorism and extremism from Afghanistan.[235] After all, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was once hosted by Afghanistan's Taliban government,[236] and is again operating inside the country as ally of the Taliban insurgency.

Much of this, however, relies on scapegoating and scare tactics to justify tight immigration and asylum policies, and are used in many countries across the world. While migrants and refugees individually might seek crime and terrorism as an option, there are no studies that support that they are more prone to do so than others. What we should not forget is that migrants and displaced populations are extremely vulnerable, especially those travelling on their own, and that we should not confuse protection needs with law enforcement.

The problem, is not solely with a 'youth bulge' linked to rapid population growth, but when countries are unable to offer employment, education and future perspectives to their younger generation.[237] If that sends them abroad in the search for work, they might be preyed upon by armed groups, such as some Taliban affiliates recruiting from within refugee camps in Pakistan, and recent reports that the Iranian government was recruiting Afghan Shia migrants to fight in Syria.[238]

Inside Afghanistan, the International Crisis Group (ICG), picked up in the Solutions Strategy, also warned about the impact of "*rapid urbanization that is contributing to rising poverty, unemployment and criminality*"[239] that may drive young men into the arms of the insurgency or other armed groups. A 2010 study also highlighted the fact that internally displaced which do not receive assistance will find protection from local strongmen if needed.[240] It furthermore warned that IDPs are easy prey for armed and insurgent groups. Anti-government groups in Afghanistan, but also pro-government militia, are getting increasingly young, with fighters often under the age of 30, including commanders. As one source put it: "*There aren't many suicide bombers over 20 years old*."[241]

**232.** International Crisis Group 2009
**233.** Ibid, p.15
**234.** The Nation 2014
**235.** Bleuer and Kazemi 2014
**236.** Ibid
**237.** Collier and Hoeffler 2001, Urdal 2004
**238.** Fassihi 2014, Reuter 2014
**239.** International Crisis Group 2009, p.i
**240.** Schmeidl *et al.* 2010
**241.** The National 2014

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

# 7. Conclusions

This paper has tried to emphasize that displacement will continue to shape the Afghan social and political landscape for years to come. With already nearly half of the Afghan population on the move (internally and cross-border), others have likely already considered an exit strategy for when the time has come to once more pick up, and seek security and livelihoods elsewhere.

Past displacement and migration has created international networks Afghans can draw upon. Furthermore, Afghans are more connected than ever (telephone, internet, social networks), with some estimating that there are as many as 18 million cell phone users in the country.[242] This has significantly improved the contact (and also reduced the perceived distance) between the Afghan Diaspora and migrants abroad with those in Afghanistan.[243]

Many Afghans also no longer have the strong connection to their own country, let alone the land and livelihood, that would make them stay put.[244] Having left before, they likely will do so again when the going gets tough. For those born abroad, departing may simply be returning to a place they are more familiar with.

While some argue that past displacement experience might lower the threshold for leaving,[245] it can equally equip people with the experience of what to do and where to go, or at least how to weigh options.[246] The personal experience of past displacement or migration and having spent considerable time abroad, often facilitates a decision to leave or thinking of other places as potential homes.[247] Understanding how previous migration experiences impact on the future mobility of the Afghan population, as well as understanding new constraints put up by neighbouring countries,[248] is key for policy makers to address future scenarios.

Part of the reluctance by international actors to accept a new displacement cycle in Afghanistan and abroad, as outlined here, may be linked to the United Nations being a member-state organization, with a majority of states still having international military operating in Afghanistan preparing for a draw-down by the end of 2014.[249] For the military to acknowledge that more Afghans are currently leaving than returning, would mean to concede that their withdrawal was far from timely. Even those critical of the military intervention and presence in Afghanistan argue that its withdrawal by the end of 2014 comes at the wrong time.[250]

In an age of globalization, where people all over the world travel more than ever in the search for employment, education, safety and better livelihoods, a policy of denial is never the best one. Mobility as a survival strategy by many Afghans fits well into existing trends, though travelling abroad is far more contentious for Afghans than other nationals, as there is always the nagging fear that many may not intend to return home.[251]

Thus, rather than fighting these migration trends that are clearly written on the wall, it is best to address them with policies that help establish

**242.** Strøm-Erichsen 2013
**243.** Hossaini 2013
**244.** Schmeidl and Maley 2008
**245.** Koser 2014
**246.** Schmeidl 2014
**247.** Van Hear et al. 2012, p.24
**248.** Koser 2014
**249.** Informal Comment to Author, UN Official, December 2013
**250.** Ruttig 2013
**251.** Bashir 2014

legal migration channels and appropriate assistance,[252] particularly to those displaced within Afghanistan. The Afghan government, struggling on many fronts, has not yet made addressing displacement little alone brain-drain, one of its main policies, though there are hopes that the newly released *National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons* holds promise.[253] This said, there is a dire need to do more, especially to add migration planning addressing growing urbanization and slum settlements due to rural-urban migration, into national development strategies and that of international donors. Addressing urban planning, finding employment opportunities and above all not marginalizing an increasingly disenchanted young population is key.

However, not all solutions for the current migration dilemma can be dealt with inside Afghanistan. The international community would be well advised to revisit third-country resettlement programmes which are current inadequate to cope with a protracted displacement situation. In the end, if Afghans are unable to find security and livelihoods inside their own country or in the region, they will try to find a way abroad, and likely not in a form or modality that western countries will welcome.

**252.** Tyler 2014
**253.** Roehrs 2013, Tyler and Schrepfer 2012, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, November 2013

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

## Afterword

## The Human Capital Outflow from Afghanistan since 2014 - The Brain drain continues

Since this paper was published in 2014, much of what was predicted has materialised.

The stress from the 2014 political and security transitions has manifested itself in ever-increasing displacement figures. 2015 was the bloodiest year on record since the UN has started to count civilian casualties in Afghanistan. The drawdown of international military gave the insurgency a greater ability to engage Afghan Security Forces in open combat resulting in increased casualties among women and children. The conflict is spreading across Afghanistan and so is displacement. IDPs stand at nearly one million, with about 300K in 2015 alone. Many more undocumented migrants are pushing into Afghan cities. Only those with no options remain in rural areas. In almost a twist of irony, Afghanistan is now hosting 200K Pakistan refugees in the south-eastern provinces of Khost and Paktika.

With the fragmentation of the Taliban and splinter groups pledging allegiance to Islamic State (Daesh), Afghanistan's economy still heavily depended on foreign assistance, the National Unity Government making little progress, many Afghans, especially the young and educated (or wishing) to be, are looking for better options elsewhere. This even prompted the Refugees and Repatriations Ministry to launch a social-media campaign in late 2015 urging young Afghans to stay home.

Not many are heeding the call. Afghan asylum seekers have been constantly on the rise and still constitute the second largest population after Syria. Hoping to slip into Europe with the Syrian mass exodus, 26% of the nearly one million (as of March 2016) asylum seekers landing on Greek islands from Turkey in 2015/16 were Afghans (UNHCR).

Unless the Afghan government manages to turn things around, gain the trust of the Afghan people, makes advances in the peace process, urban areas that are the first arrival point of rural migrants receive better assistance and there is an economic revival, the exodus will continue, even if asylum Europe is exhausted by Syrians. As an Afghan saying goes, "if you block a stream, it will simply spill elsewhere unless you address root causes at the source".

**Susanne Schmeidl**
2016

## References

*Afghanistan – Where Things Stand,* ABC NEWS/BBC/ARD POLL, 11 January 2010

Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). *Summary Report on Investigation of Causes and Factors of Trafficking in Women and Children*, July 2011, http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e1d57012.html

Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. "Unaccompanied Afghan children: on the move again?" *Forced Migration Review*: *Afghanistan's displaced people: 2014 and beyond*, Issue 46, May 2014: 36; http://www.fmreview.org/en/afghanistan/AREU.pdf

Afghans Abroad. "The Diaspora: Afghans Living Abroad"; http://afghansabroad.wordpress.com/about/

Agence France-Presse.  "Afghan brain drain quickens ahead of West withdrawal"; Agence France-Presse, 14 December 2012, http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/world/archives/2012/12/14/2003550134

Amnesty International, *Fleeing War, Finding Misery: The Plight of the Internally Displaced in Afghanistan,* 2012, http://www.refworld.org/docid/4f48e3862.html

Ariana News. "2.5 million Afghans living abroad illegally", 24 April 2014; http://ariananews.af/regional/2-5-million-afghans-living-abroad-illegally/

Associated Press. "Tough times follow Afghan refugees fleeing Taliban to Delhi"; Associated Press, 24 July 2013; http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/tough-times-follow-afghan-refugees-fleeing-taliban-to-delhi/1146123/

Australian Human Rights Commission. *Asylum Seeker and Refugees Guide.* https://www.humanrights.gov.au/asylum-seekers-and-refugees-guide

Azimi, Sayed 'Aziz'. "A Closer Look at the Afghan "Brain Drain""; Technologists News, 19 July 2012; http://www.technologistsinc.com/News/News_Releases/pr-071912-web.php

Bashir, Malali. "Asylum Concerns Haunt Western Exchange Programs For Afghan Students"; Radio Free Europe, 22 July 2014; http://www.rferl.org/content/afghan_student_exchange_western/24496031.html

Beall, Joe and Daniel Esser. *Shaping Urban Futures: Challenges to Governing and Managing Afghan Cities*. Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, March 2005;

Bearak, Max. "India a Hub for Patients from Afghanistan." The New York Times, India Ink: Notes on the World's Largest Democracy, 1 November 2013; http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/01/india-a-hub-for-patients-from-afghanistan/

Beath, Andrew; Fotini Christia and Ruben Enikolopov. *Empowering*

*Women: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan;* Impact Evaluation Series No. 76 (WPS6269); The World Bank: East Asia and the Pacific Region, November 2012; http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/1813-9450-6269

Ben-David, Esther. "Europe's Shifting Immigration Dynamic"; *Middle East Quarterly;* Vol 15(2): 15-24; Spring 2009, http://www.meforum.org/2107/europe-shifting-immigration-dynamic

Bleuer, Christian and Said Reza Kazemi. *Between Co-Operation and Insulation: Afghanistan's Relations with the Central Asian Republics*; Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network Report, 27 June 2014; https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/20140608-Bleuer_Kazemi-Central_Asia.pdf

Bowley, Graham. "Fears of the Future Haunt a Budding Generation of Afghan Strivers"; New York Times, 11 February 2013; http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/12/world/asia/middle-class-afghans-face-a-murky-future.html?pagewanted=1&hp

Carberry, Sean. "As NATO Draws Down, Afghans Fear A Brain Drain"; National Public Radio, 26 June 2012; http://www.npr.org/2012/06/26/155705656/as-nato-draws-down-afghans-fear-a-brain-drain

Chattha, Ilyas. *Refugee Resettlement from Pakistan: Findings from Afghan Refugee Camps in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP);* KNOW RESET Research Report 2013/01, Country of First Asylum Report; European University Institute: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies 2013; http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/26649/CARIM-Know%20Reset_RR-2013-01.pdf?sequence=1

Colville, Rupert. "The Biggest Caseload in the World," *Refugees*, 108 (2): 3–9, 1997

Das, Bijoyeta. "Afghan students flock to India's universities"; *Aljazeera* News, 03 June 2013; http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/04/201342211228401708.html

Deutsche Welle. "India has become the number one destination for Afghan students"; Deutsche Welle, 27 January 2011; http://www.dw.de/india-has-become-the-number-one-destination-for-afghan-students/a-6419313

European Commission. "Shaping a common approach on unaccompanied minors"; *European Commission - MEMO*/12/716; Brussels, 28 September 2012; http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-716_en.htm

Fassihi, Farnaz. "Iran Pays Afghans to Fight for Assad." Wall Street Journal, 22 May 2014; http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304908304579564161508613846

Ferris, Elizabeth. *The Central American Refugees.* New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987.

Ferris-Rotman, Amie. "Daunted Afghans find refuge in former foe Russia"; Reuters News, Moscow, 22 August 2011; http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/22/us-russia-afghans-immigrants-idUSTRE77L1MR20110822

Fishstein, Paul; Islamuddin Amaki and Mohammed Qaasim. *Balkh's economy in transition;* Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013. http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1306%20IP%20Balkh%20Economy%20Aug%202013.pdf

Fitrat, Abdul Qadeer. "The Role of Diaspora in Private Sector Development" Presented at the UNITAR Seminar: *Diasporas and development in conflict-affected countries;* 6 Nov. 2007; https://www.unitar.org/ny/sites/unitar.org.ny/files/The%20Role%20of%20Diaspora%20in%20Private%20Sector%20Development%20Fitrat.pdf

Giovacchini, Tommaso. *Governance and Representation in the Afghan Urban Transition*; Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, August 2011; http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1121E-Governance%20and%20Representation%20in%20the%20Afghan%20Urban%20Transition%20WP.pdf

Giovacchini, Tommaso. *Land Reform in Afghanistan (LARA): Jalalabad City Profile*; United States Agency for International Development/Tetra Tech ARD, March 2013; http://api.ning.com/files/at5DaH0Gs6m1KNQSNbpnnWCbc5mdE*JR0UH3zuR7N2OptHLoQvy-zqpK78Wlzu0bgmeyYrEDTlgHPric8lWFNxF4-iUsifxt/JalalabadCityProfileGiovacchiniMAR2013.pdf

Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA). *Millennium Development Goals Report 2012,* Kabul, Afghanistan: Directorate of Policy and Evaluation in General Directorate of Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation of Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Ministry of Economy, December 2013; http://www.af.undp.org/content/dam/afghanistan/docs/MDGs/Afghanistan%20MDGs%202012%20Report.pdf

Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA). *National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons.* Kabul: Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, 25 November 2013, http://morr.gov.af/Content/Media/Documents/NationalIDPPolicy-FINAL-English262014830451553325325.pdf

Hanifi, M. Jamil. "Anthropology and the Representations of Recent Migrations from Afghanistan," pp. 291-321 in E.M. Godziak and D.J. Shandy [Eds.] *Rethinking Refuge and Displacement: Selected Papers on Refugees and Immigrants*, Vol. 8, 2000. Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association.

Hasrat-Nazimi, Waslat. "The Afghan brain drain"; Deutsche Welle, 21 June 2013; http://www.dw.de/the-afghan-brain-drain/a-16898324

Hatton, Timothy J. and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Demographic and Economic Pressure on Emigration out of Africa*, Institute for the Study

of Labor Discussion Paper Series, No. 250, January 2001; http://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/21099/1/dp250.pdf

Herold, Marc W. "A Dossier on Civilian Victims of United States' Aerial Bombing of Afghanistan: A Comprehensive Accounting [revised]," University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, 2002, http://cursor.org/stories/civilian_deaths.htm

Hogg, Richard, Claudia Nassif, Camilo Gomez Osorio, William Byrd, and Andrew Beath. *Afghanistan in Transition: Looking beyond 2014. Directions in Development*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2013

Hossaini, Sayed Asef. "Afghanische Diaspora und Brain Drain," Afghanistan: Das Zweite Gesicht; 21 January 2013; http://www.bpb.de/internationales/asien/afghanistan-das-zweite-gesicht/153504/afghanische-diaspora-und-brain-drain?p=all

Human Rights Watch. "Cluster Bombs in Afghanistan," A Human Rights Watch Backgrounder, October 2001, www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/arms/cluster-bck1031.pdf

Human Rights Watch. "Iran: Honor Afghans' Right to Seek Asylum; Hundreds of Thousands Face Imminent Expulsion"; Human Rights Watch News, 9 September 2013; http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/09/09/iran-honor-afghans-right-seek-asylum

Human Rights Watch. "Paying for the Taliban's Crimes: Abuses Against Ethnic Pashtuns in Northern Afghanistan" Human Rights Watch Afghanistan Reports, Vol. 14, No. 2, April 2002; http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2002/afghan2/afghan0402.pdf

Ibrahimi, Niamatullah. *Bureaucratic Policies and Patronage Politics: Prospects and Challenges of Private Higher Education in Afghanistan*; Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network and Afghanistan Watch Report, 1 June 2014; http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/20140527-NIbrahimi-Private_Higher_Education.pdf

ICEF Monitor. "Afghanistan Doubling Student Numbers in India and Turkey"; ICEF Monitor, 9 April 2012; http://monitor.icef.com/2012/04/afghanistan-doubling-student-numbers-in-india-and-turkey/

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). "Afghanistan: Don't deport child migrants from Europe - rights groups", Kabul: Integrated Regional Information Network, 22 June 2010; http://www.irinnews.org/report/89570/afghanistan-don-t-deport-child-migrants-from-europe-rights-groups

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). "Insecurity drives Afghan Child migration"; Nangarhar: Integrated Regional Information Network, 19 August 2013; http://www.irinnews.org/fr/report/98602/insecurity-driving-afghan-child-migration

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). *From pillar to post the plight of Afghans abroad*, Kabul: IRIN In-Depth, February 2012; http://www.irinnews.org/pdf/irinnews_indepth_from_pillar_to_post_the_plight_of_afghans_abroad.pdf

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). *Peak displacement numbers in Afghanistan reported from June 2013 – April 2014.* Geneva: IDMC, 19 June 2014; http://www.internal-displacement. org/south-and-south-east-asia/afghanistan/2014/peak-displacement-numbers-in-afghanistan-reported-from-june-2013-april-2014

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. "Afghanistan: comprehensive response urgently required as displacement crisis worsens", Geneva: IDMC, 25 March 2013; http://www.internal-displacement.org/ south-and-south-east-asia/afghanistan/2013/comprehensive-response-urgently-required-as-displacement-crisis-worsens

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. "Afghanistan: Internal displacement in brief", Geneva: IDMC; 31 December 2013; http:// www.internal-displacement.org/south-and-south-east-asia/afghanistan/ summary

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Afghanistan: Armed conflict forces increasing numbers of Afghans to flee their homes. Geneva: IDMC, April 2010; http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/ library/Asia/Afghanistan/pdf/Afghanistan-April-2010.pdf

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). *Afghanistan: Increasing Hardship and Limited Support for Growing Displaced Population.* Geneva: IDMC, 28 October 2008; http://www. internal-displacement.org/assets/library/Asia/Afghanistan/pdf/ Afghanistan-October-2008.pdf

International Committee of the Red Cross. *Our World: Views from Afghanistan, Opinion Survey 2009.* Geneva: ICRC, 2009; www.icrc.org/ Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/views-from-field-report-240609/$File/Our-World-Views-from-Afghanistan-I-ICRC.pdf.

International Crisis Group. *Afghanistan: What Now for Refugees*, Asia Report 175, 31 August 2009; http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/ asia/south-asia/afghanistan/175_afghanistan___what_now_for_refugees. pdf

International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Samuel Hall Consulting. *Displacement Dynamics – Summary: IDP Movement Tracking, Needs and Vulnerability Analysis: Herat and Helmand Afghanistan.* Kabul: IOM, Samuel Hall, 2014; http://www.iom.int/files/ live/sites/iom/files/Country/docs/IOM-Afghanistan-IDP-Survey-Herat-Helmand-Summary-Final.pdf

International Organization for Migration (IOM). *Afghanistan: Natural Disaster-induced IDPs in 2013 by place of origin and documented movements*; Kabul: IOM, 2013; http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/ files/resources/1268.pdf

International Organization for Migration (IOM). *Trafficking in Persons in Afghanistan: Field Survey Report*, Kabul: International Organization for Migration, 2008; https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/ mainsite/activities/countries/docs/afghanistan/iom_report_trafficking_ afghanistan.pdf

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

Katseli, Louka T.; Robert E.B. Lucas and Theodora Xenogiani. "Effects of Migration on Sending Countries: What Do We Know?" OECD Development Centre, Working Paper No. 250; UN/POP/MIG/SYMP/2006/11/Rev; 31 August 2006; http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/turin/Symposium_Turin_files/P11_Katseli.pdf

Khan, Ameen Amjad. "Pakistan and India offer scholarship olive branch"; University World News: The Global Window on Higher Education, Issue No: 229; 03 July 2012; http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=2012070318064742

Koser, Khalid. "Who Cares when Migrants Become Internally Displaced Persons?" *Brookings Institution Blog Post*, 8 October 2013; http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/10/08-migrants-idps-koser

Koser, Khalid. *Transition, Crisis and Mobility in Afghanistan: Rhetoric and Reality*; Kabul: International Organization for Migration, January 2014; http://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/Country/docs/Transition-Crisis-and-Mobility-in-Afghanistan-2014.pdf

Kresse, Kai and Heike Liebau, *Mobility and agency: movement and people*, Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Programmatic Texts, No. 8, 2013; http://d-nb.info/1047572133/34

Kronenfeld, Daniel A. "Afghan Refugees in Pakistan: Not All Refugees, Not Always in Pakistan, Not Necessarily Afghan?" *Journal for Refugee Studies* 21(2008): 1-21.

Kronenfeld, Daniel A. "Can Afghanistan Cope with Returnees? Can returnees  Cope in Afghanistan? A Look at Some New Data." Washington D.C.: MEI-FRS, 25 January 2011; http://www.refugeecooperation.org/publications/afghanistan/pdf/02_kronenfeld.pdf;

Latifi, Ali M. "Uncertainty forces Afghan youth abroad"; Aljazeera, 23 Jun 2013; http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/06/20136191132460550.html

Majidi, Nassim. "Urban Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Afghanistan." Washington D.C.: MEI-FRS, 25 January 2011; http://www.refugeecooperation.org/publications/afghanistan/pdf/01_majidi.pdf

Malit Jr., Froilan T. And Ali Al Youh. "Labor Migration in the United Arab Emirates: Challenges and Responses"; Feature, Migration Policy Institute, 8 September 2013, http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/labor-migration-united-arab-emirates-challenges-and-responses

Massey, Douglas S.; Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci,Adela Pellegrino, and J. Edward Taylor. *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

McVeigh, Tracy. "Afghan women leave the country in fear of Taliban return." T*he Guardian: The Observer*, 27 May 2012; http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/26/afghan-women-security-fears-inequality

Metcalfe, Victoria; Simone Haysom, with Ellen Martin. *Sanctuary in the City? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Kabul*, HPG Working Paper, Overseas Development Institute, Humanitarian Policy Group, June 2012. http://www.refworld.org/docid/511e53042.html

Mogelson, Luke. "The Dream Boat"; New York Times Magazine, 15 November 2013; http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/17/magazine/the-impossible-refugee-boat-lift-to-christmas-island.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Mohmand, Rostum Shah. "The Saga of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan." Washington D.C.: MEI-FRS, 14 February 2011; http://www.refugeecooperation.org/publications/afghanistan/pdf/06_mohmand.pdf

Monsutti, Alessandro A Strategic Dispersion: The Remittance System of Afghan Refugees and Migrants; Middle East Institute, 20 April 2012; http://www.mei.edu/content/strategic-dispersion-remittance-system-afghan-refugees-and-migrants

Monsutti, Alessandro. *Transnational Networks: Recognizing a Regional Reality*. Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2006

Monsutti, Alessandro. *War and Migration: Social Networks and Economic Strategies of the Hazaras of Afghanistan*. New York & London: Routledge (Middle East Studies: History, Politics, and Law), 2005

Mougne, Christine. *Trees only move in the wind: A study of unaccompanied Afghan children in Europe*, Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES), 5 June 2010; http://www.unhcr.org/4c1229669.pdf

Najafizada, Eltaf. "Afghans Start to Take the Money and Run"; *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 12 July 2012; http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-07-12/afghans-start-to-take-the-money-and-run

*National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12*. Afghanistan Living Condition Survey, Kabul, Afghanistan: Central Statistics Organization and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, 2014.

Natta, Pierfrancesco Maria. "Anchoring Return: The role of The Solutions Strategy." *Forced Migration Review*: *Afghanistan's displaced people: 2014 and beyond*, Issue 46, May 2014: 12-14; http://www.fmreview.org/en/afghanistan/natta.pdf

Norwegian Refugee Council, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Samuel Hall Consulting and Joint IDP Profiling Services. *Challenges of IDP Protection: Research study on the protection of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan*. Kabul: NRC, IDMC, Samuel Hall and JIPS, November 2012; http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/challenges-of-idp-protection-afghanistan-2012.pdf

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

Norwegian Refugee Council, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (NRC/IDMC), *Afghanistan: Conflict and Displacement*, Disaster Needs Analysis, 10 October 2012; http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/afghanistan_conflict_and_displacement.pdf

Overfeld, Guenter and Michael Zumot. *Economic development and security for Afghanistan – Increasing jobs and income with the help of the Gulf States* New York, EastWest Institute (EWI), 2010. http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?id=113055&lng=en

Peel, Michael. "Wealthy Afghans look overseas for bolt-hole"; Financial Times, 29 April 2014; www.ft.com

Reuter, Christoph. "Death in Aleppo: A Group of Afghan fighters located in Syria." *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 6 June 2014; http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/death-in-aleppo-a-group-of-afghan-fighters-located-in-syria?format=pdf

Roehrs, Christine. "On the Run without Aid: The much delayed policy on Afghanistan's internally displaced"; Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network Dispatch, 20 October 2013; http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/on-the-run-without-aid-the-much-delayed-policy-on-afghanistans-internally-displaced/

Ruttig, Thomas. "Some Things Got Better – How Much Got Good? A review of 12 years of international intervention in Afghanistan," Afghanistan Analysts Network, 30 December 2013; https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/some-things-got-better-how-much-got-good-a-short-review-of-12-years-of-international-intervention-in-afghanistan/

Schmeidl, Susanne and William Maley. "The Case of the Afghan Refugee Population: Finding Durable Solutions in Contested Transitions." Pp.131-179 in Howard Adelman (ed.) *Protracted Displacement in Asia: No Place to Call Home*. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008.

Schmeidl, Susanne with Eugenia Piza-Lopez. *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action.* London/Berne: International Alert and swisspeace, 2002; http://www.international-alert.org/publications/getdata.php?doctype=Pdf&id=80

Schmeidl, Susanne. "The Quest for Accuracy in the Estimation of Forced Migration." Pp.164-182 in Stephen C. Lubkemann, Larry Minear, and Thomas G. Weiss, (eds.) *Humanitarian Action: Social Science Connections.* Providence, RI: Watson Institute, Occasional Paper Series, 2000.

Schmeidl, Susanne. "Heeding the warning signs: further displacement predicted for Afghanistan;" *Forced Migration Review*: *Afghanistan's displaced people: 2014 and beyond*, Issue 46, May 2014: 41-44; www.fmreview.org/afghanistan/schmeidl

Schmeidl, Susanne; Alexander D. Mundt and Nick Miszak, *Beyond the Blanket: Towards more Effective Protection for Internally Displaced Persons in Southern Afghanistan*, a Joint Report of the Brookings/Bern

Project on Internal Displacement and The Liaison Office, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, May 2010; www.brookings.edu/reports/.../05_idp_protection_afghanistan.aspx;

Shah, Syed Ali. "Afghan refugees in Balochistan seeking asylum abroad: UNHCR." Dawn, 27 February 2014; http://www.dawn.com/news/1089875

Shahbandari, Shafaat. "Afghans take hope from UAE's achievements"; Gulf News, 30 November 2012; http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/society/afghans-take-hope-from-uae-s-achievements-1.1112640

Siegel, Melissa. "Understanding Afghan migration"; *Debating Development*, A conversational blog from researchers at the Oxford Department of International Development; 13 February 2013; http://blog.qeh.ox.ac.uk/?p=147

Siegel, Melissa; Michaella Vanore, Robbert Lucas, Chris de Neubourg. *The Netherlands-Afghanistan Remittance Corridor Study;* Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 2010; http://siteresources.worldbank.org/FINANCIALSECTOR/Resources/282044-1241752859230/The_Netherlands_Afghanistan_Remittance_Corridor_Study_2010.pdf

Soufan Group. "Afghanistan's Capital Flight and Post-2014 Future", *TSG IntelBrief*; 8 January 2014; http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-afghanistans-capital-flight-and-post-2014-future/

STATT. *Afghan Migration in flux*; Synapse: Issue 10, January 2013; http://www.statt.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/STATT-Synapse-Issue-10-Afghan-Migration-in-Flux.pdf

Strøm-Erichsen, Anne-Grete. Voices of the future Afghanistan after 2014 . Opening remarks; 4 April 2013; http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumentarkiv/stoltenberg-ii/fd/taler-og-artikler/2013/voices-of-the-future--afghanistan-after-.html?id=721572

Suhrke, Astri. *When More Is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan;* Columbia University Press, 2012

The Asia Foundation. *Afghanistan in 2013: A Survey of the Afghan People*. Kabul: The Asia Foundation, December 2013; http://asiafoundation.org/country/afghanistan/2013-poll.php

*The Cost of War: Afghan Experiences of Conflict, 1978–2009*, A Joint Report by Nine NGOs Working in Afghanistan; Kabul: Oxfam International, 2009; http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/afghanistan-the-cost-of-wa

The Liaison Office. *Faryab Provincial Profile*, unpublished internal report; Kabul: TLO 2014

The Liaison Office. *The Kuchi Nomads of Khost and Paktia Provinces*, Kabul/Eschborn: GTZ and The Liaison Office, November 2009

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

The Nation. "Four thousand Afghan refugees blacklisted"; 14 July 2014; http://www.nation.com.pk/national/14-Jul-2014/four-thousand-afghan-refugees-blacklisted

The National. "Voices on Afghanistan: Youth are being left out of the national debate"; 22 March 2014; http://www.thenational.ae/world/central-asia/voices-on-afghanistan-youth-are-being-left-out-of-the-national-debate#ixzz38fqwfe5d

Times of India. "Afghanistan Hails India for Easing Visa Policy." The Times of India, 2014; http://www.veooz.com/news/rHIjiRQ.html

Trilling, David. "Tajikistan: Migrant Remittances Now Exceed Half of GDP"; Inside the Cocoon: Central Asia Today; 15 April 2014; http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68272

Turton, David and Peter Marsden, *Taking Refugees for a Ride? The Politics of Refugee Return in Afghanistan;* Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), 2002; http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/47c3f3cb1a.pdf

Tyler, Dan and Nina Schreper. "Afghanistan consults on an IDP Policy." Forced Migration Review 40: Being Young and Out of Place, August 2012; http://www.fmreview.org/young-and-out-of-place/schrepfer-tyler.html

Tyler, Dan and Susanne Schmeidl. "Urban realities for displaced young women and girls;" *Forced Migration Review*: *Afghanistan's displaced people: 2014 and beyond*, Issue 46, May 2014: 37-38; www.fmreview.org/afghanistan/tyler-schmeidl

Tyler, Dan. "Reframing solutions for Afghan refugees." *Forced Migration Review*: *Afghanistan's displaced people: 2014 and beyond*, Issue 46, May 2014: 18-22; http://www.fmreview.org/afghanistan/tyler

U.S. Census Bureau. "Total Ancestry Reported"; 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_11_1YR_B04003&prodType=table

U.S. Department of State; *2013 Trafficking in Persons Report: Country Narratives;* U.S. Department of State: Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons; http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2013/215538.htm

UN OCHA. *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2004; http://www.idpguidingprinciples.org/

UN OCHA. *Humanitarian Bulletin, Issue No. 11,* United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, December 2012, http://www.refworld.org/docid/511e55642.html.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). "Students from a given country studying abroad (outbound mobile students)"; United Nations Statistics Division, 2014; http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=UNESCO&f=series%3AED_FSOABS;

UNHCR and Altai Consulting. *Study on Cross Border Population Movements between Afghanistan and Pakistan.* Kabul: UNHCR/Altai, June 2009; http://www.unhcr.org/4ad448670.pdf

UNHCR. "Time Series – Persons of concern to UNHCR", *UNHCR Population Statistics Reference Database*, Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014a; http://popstats.unhcr.org/PSQ_TMS.aspx

UNHCR. *2013 UNHCR Global Trends*; UNHCR, 2014b http://www.unhcr.org/5399a14f9.html

UNHCR. *2014 UNHCR country operations profile – Europe*; Geneva: UNHCR 2014c http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a02d9346.html

UNHCR, *Syrian Regional Refugee Response*, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, 31 August 2014; http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php

UNHCR. "World Refugee Day: Global forced displacement tops 50 million for first time in post-World War II era." Geneva: UNHCR, News Stories, 20 June 2014; http://www.unhcr.org/53a155bc6.html

UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, May 2014, http://www.refworld.org/docid/537220114.html

UNHCR. *IDP Sample Survey in Kabul City.* Kabul: UNHCR Sub-Office Kabul, 1 May 2014

UNHCR. "UNHCR report shows leap in asylum applications for industrialized countries", Geneva: UNHCR News Stories, 21 March 2014; http://www.unhcr.org/532afe986.html

UNHCR. "Pakistan begins issuing new cards to 1.6 million Afghan refugees," *UNHCR Briefing Notes*, 25 February 2014; http://www.unhcr.org/530c76849.html

UNHCR. *Asylum Trends 2013: Level and Trends in Industrialized Countries*; Geneva: UNHCR, 2013; http://unhcr.org.au/unhcr/images/Asylum%20Trends%202013.pdf

UNHCR. "New UNHCR report says global forced displacement at 18-year high." *UNHCR News Stories*, 19 June 2013; http://www.unhcr.org/51c071816.html

UNHCR. *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees Summary Progress Report*, Afghanistan: UNHCR, September 2013; http://www.unhcr.org/522722e99.html

UNHCR. *Progress Report on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan refugees: A Multilateral Approach – Gathering Momentum,* September 2012, http://www.unhcr.org/50927e7c6.html

UNHCR. *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries*, May 2012, http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4f9016576.html

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

UNHCR. *VolRep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update*, Afghanistan: UNHCR, November 2013; http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/52aac5ac4.pdf

UNHCR. "Afghan returnees facing problems in home district seeks safety in Kabul area." UNHCR News Stories, 4 February 2010; http://www.unhcr.org/4b6ad73792.html

UNHCR. "First national IDP report reveals complex challenges for internally displaced"; Joint Press Release: Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation and UNHCR; 15 December 2008; http://www.unhcr.org/49b8e91c2.html

UNHCR. *National Profile of Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan*, Kabul, Afghanistan: 6 August 2008; http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/51ffdca34.pdf

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. *Annual Report 2009, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, Kabul, Afghanistan: UNAMA, January 2010; http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Protection%20of%20Civilian%202009%20report%20English.pdf

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. *Mid-Year Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, Kabul, Afghanistan: UNAMA, July 2014 http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=m_XyrUQDKZg%3d&tabid=12254&mid=15756&language=en-US

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). *The Least Developed Countries Report 2012: Harnessing Remittances and Diaspora Knowledge to Build Productive Capacities.* United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2012; http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ldc2012_en.pdf

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). *Corruption in Afghanistan: Recent Patterns and Trends - Summary Findings*, Kabul: UNODC and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption, December 2012, http://www.unodc.org/documents/frontpage/Corruption_in_Afghanistan_FINAL.pdf

United Nations Population Fund. *State of the World Population 2013*, UNFPA http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/swp2013/EN-SWOP2013-final.pdf

Urdal, Henrik. "The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950-2000." World Bank: Social Development Papers, Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction, Paper No. 14, July 2004; http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2004/07/28/000012009_20040728162225/Rendered/PDF/29740.pdf

Van Hear, Nicholas. "Refugee Diasporas, Remittances, Development, and Conflict"; *Migration Information Source*, 1 June 2003; http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugee-diasporas-remittances-development-and-conflict

Van Hear, Nicholas; Oliver Bakewell and Katy Long. *Drivers of Migration;* Brighton, University of Sussex: Migrating out of Poverty

Research Programme Consortium, Working Paper 1, March 2012; http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/files/file.php?name=wp1-drivers-of-migration.pdf&site=354

Voice of America, *Afghan Refugees in Pakistan Anxious as Year-End Looms,* 19 June 2012, http://www.voanews.com/content/afghan-refugees-in-pakistan-anxious-as-year-end-looms/1213115.html.

Wickramasekara, Piyasiri and Nilim Baruah. *Labour migration for decent work in Afghanistan: Issues and Challenges*; International Labour Migration (ILO): Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2013; http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_229671.pdf

Wigglesworth, Robin. "Afghan elite enjoys high life in Dubai." Dubai: Financial Times, 8 September 2010; http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4843bd14-bb74-11df-a136-00144feab49a.html#ixzz1TlwbG2mP

World Bank and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Research Study on IDPs in urban settings – Afghanistan*. Kabul: The World Bank and UNHCR, May 2011; https://s3.amazonaws.com/tdh_e-platform/assets/137/original/WB_UNHCR_Report_on_Urban_IDPs__finalMay4.pdf?1307851022

World Bank. *Migration and Remittances Download Page*; World Bank, 2014; http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTDECPROSPECTS/0,,contentMDK:22759429~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:476883,00.html

World Food Programme. "WFP's Hunger Map and Hunger Hot Spots 2001," WPF Media Brief, 9 January 2001, http://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/background-wfp-identifies-2001-hot-spots

Younossi, Obaid. "A brain drain threatens Afghanistan's future"; *New York Times Opinion*; 9 February 2006; http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/09/opinion/09iht-edyounossi.html?_r=0

Zucchino, David. "U.S. visa backlog leaves Afghan interpreters in limbo;" 31 January 2014; http://articles.latimes.com/2014/jan/31/world/la-fg-afghanistan-interpreters-20140131

**Additional Data Sources Used in Figure 2**

Australian Bureau of Statistics. "People in Australia who were born in Afghanistan 2011"; QuickStats Country of Birth, Census Australia; http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/7201_0

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Oslo. "Afghans in Sweden." http://www.afghanistanembassy.no/cat/112.aspx

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. "Relations between Afghanistan and Germany", BMZ Afghanistan Overview Webpage; http://www.bmz.de/en/what_we_do/countries_regions/asien/afghanistan/index.html

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

International Labour Organization. *2013 Labour migration*; Kabul, Afghanistan: ILO, 2014; http://moec.gov.af/Content/files/Session%20 3%20-%20Labor%20Migration.pdf

International Labour Organization. *Labour Migration Report*; ILO, http:// www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/ publication/wcms_229671.pdf

International Organization for Migration (IOM). "Afghanistan Flash Flood Situation Report 3"; *Humanitarian Weekly Report* (covering 24 April - 7 May); 7 May 2014 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb. int/files/resources/IOM-HAP%20Afghanistan%20Flash%20Flood%20 Update%207%20May%202014.pdf

Kozhevnikov, Roman. "Tajikistan will need help with Afghan refugees – UNHCR"; Reuters, 23 October 2009, http://uk.reuters. com/article/2009/10/23/uk-tajikistan-afghanistan-refugees-inter- idUKTRE59M34920091023

Nicolaas, Han; Elma Wobma en Jeroen Ooijevaar. "Demografie van (niet-westerse) allochtonen in Nederland"; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek; 2010; http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/240E5858-D04D-47EA- 9C22-AB8E9297E2D2/0/2010k4b15p22art.pdf

UK Office for National Statistics. "2011 Census: Ethnic group (detailed), local authorities in England and Wales; Table QS211EW http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/datasets-and-tables/index.html?pageSize =50&sortBy=none&sortDirection=none&newquery=Afghan&content- type=Reference+table&content-type=Dataset

Statistics Canada. "Ethnic Origin (247), Single and Multiple Ethnic Origin Responses (3) and Sex (3) for the Population of Canada, Provinces, Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2006 Census - 20% Sample Data"; *2006 Census*, http://www12. statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/tbt/Rp-eng.cfm?LANG=E &APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&G RP=1&PID=92333&PRID=0&PTYPE=88971,97154&S=0&SHOWALL=0&S UB=0&Temporal=2006&THEME=80&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=

United States Census Bureau. "Total Ancestry Reported"; 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; http://factfinder2.census. gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_11_1YR_ B04003&prodType=table

# THE VOICES BEHIND THE REFUGEE OUTFLOW FROM AFGHANISTAN

## Hameed Hakimi*
## Barin Sultani Haymon**

For more than three decades, Afghanistan was the number one source country of the global refugee population. This only changed in late 2014, as the increasing severity of the Syrian crisis tipped Afghanistan into second position in terms of gross headcount. Growing insecurity, ominously demonstrated in Taliban's recent brief occupation of Kunduz province, coupled with the economic hardships facing Afghans as evident in growing unemployment figures, an increasing number of Afghans are seeking refuge outside their country – especially in Europe.

In response, the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation recently launched a campaign[1], for instance, to tackle the exodus of Afghan youth – the so-called 'brain drain'[2]. The campaign makes use of evocative messaging and threatening imagery to caution potential emigrants; examples include pictures of an overcrowded boat, a shipwreck, or a group of young Afghans detained behind a fence. This is meant to illustrate the perils of the journey out of the 'homeland'. Facebook is being used as a popular tool to dissuade those intent on leaving Afghanistan, with emerging localised[3] efforts appealing to a sense of patriotic pride or, more cynically, leveraging 'guilt' as a motivating factor to deter the 'abandonment of the homeland' in a time of dire need. In this context, those who decide to seek a new life in Europe, Australia and America are portrayed as uncaring and callous individuals. This is not endemic of Afghans only – most recently, Germany's Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière suggested that middle class Afghans should remain and help build the country up.

The current narrative in the West explaining why Afghans are leaving is media-centric and misleading. The voices of those who are leaving are largely unheard, quieted by the social media efforts of the Afghan government and a rising opposition in Europe, who are increasingly reluctant to treat Afghan asylum cases in par with the Syrians who are escaping civil war. Media commentary and the social media frenzy make little mention of the real voices of those Afghans who are leaving, often opting for a life of uncertainty in hopes of obtaining a refugee status in Western countries. Is leaving an easy decision? What factors are considered in choosing the target destination? How are the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions in the region affecting Afghans' choice to leave their country? Is there a 'watershed' moment that pushes them to leave, or is it simply a matter of biding time until individual circumstances allow a means to an exit?

*Hameed Hakimi is a Research Associate at Chatham House in London. Previously, he has held researcher roles at various institutions including the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). Between 2014 and 2015, Hameed was an International Advisor for policy and capacity development at the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul.

** Barin Sultani Haymon is an independent researcher with more than a decade's experience in the non-profit sector, working closely with several charitable foundations focused on Afghanistan. She has received leadership training under Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire, former Commander of the U.N. Assistance Mission for Rwanda, and was the youngest-ever board member of the National Conference of Community and Justice (NCCJ).

1. *Facebook, 'Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (2015)'- Don't go. Stay with me. There might be no return!.*
2. VOA, 'Afghanistan's Other Security Threat: Brain Drain' (Sep 2015)
3. 'Afghanistan Needs You'(2015).

In exploring the exodus of Afghans – which includes a high number of educated Afghan youth – we are confronted with the complexities of a conflict-ridden country where seeking safety and finding economic security supersedes any sense of belonging and nationalist sentiments. These complexities can be untangled significantly through meaningful conversations with those Afghans who are intent on leaving. The aim of this paper is to uncover some of the factors driving the Afghan exodus as told by Afghans themselves. This is important for going beyond the simplistic and often sensationalist narrative around the problem of the net migration outflow from Afghanistan.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to develop a better understanding of the complex issue of Afghans leaving their home country, a study was undertaken for this paper by way of 25 semi-structured interviews from a sample of Afghans, independent experts and researchers. The study was carried out during the period from January to April 2016, with the majority of the respondents located in Afghanistan, but also a few in the UK, Norway, Belgium and Greece. Many of the interviews were conducted via phone; however, in April 2016, one of the authors travelled to Kabul where a number of focused but informal extensive face to face conversations took place with Afghans who were either interested in leaving, or who were actively seeking an exit. The majority of the interviewees were males.[4] The females participating in this study were either: a) attached to male spouses who were likewise pursuing an exit route, or b) seeking legal recourse for leaving Afghanistan (i.e. foreign visa). Many of the respondents were educated through secondary level at minimum, with nearly all having completed or in the process of completing postsecondary education. The age range of the respondents was 20 to 38 years old. Almost half were married with at least one child. Nearly everyone, excluding the respondents who were in full-time education, was employed, mostly in the public sector. Other vocations among the respondents included merchants, NGO employees, young people and day labourers.

The interview questions were designed to open the conversation with respondents on establishing a composite of relevant "push" factors. In addition to the questions we asked on push factors, the interviewees also discussed, where relevant, details of previous experiences of migration; family members who have been refugees; and whether the respondents used technology and social media to keep in touch relatives outside Afghanistan, particularly in the West if applicable.

The interviews also explored questions with respondents on the timing and manner of their decision to leave, how they were planning to leave (or how they had left), which country they targeted as their final destination; their thoughts on the prospects of settling in neighbouring countries; and their reasons for wanting to exit Afghanistan. In coding the data, numerous themes began to emerge. However, it should be noted that a separate, broader study would be more appropriate to undertake an in-depth and fully comprehensive exploration of all thematic issues surrounding the commonalities and differences that came to fore as a result of these interviews. The limited scope and the space of this paper does not allow for such an analysis.

4. Women who wish to pursue illegal (i.e., smuggling) routes out of Afghanistan face a significant social stigma; as such, identifying willing female participants in a study of this nature has been an onerous challenge.

# PICTURE OF THE EXODUS

## Data and Analysis

The most salient explanatory factors for leavers were: *security*, *unemployment* and economic uncertainty, *corruption*, and/or *a crisis of confidence in Afghan government and Afghanistan's future*. These factors were often explained in connection with one another, suggesting a linked set of circumstances which are pushing Afghans to seek an exit. Based on the interviews with Afghans and as supported by discussions with independent experts, all of these themes were prevalent, recurrent, and intertwined to such a degree that the authors feel it would be arbitrary to categorise them in a particular objective order of priority.

## Security

The drawdown of NATO troops coupled with the fact the Taliban currently control more territory than at any time since the US invasion[5] has led to increased violence and instability in Afghanistan. A recent example is the April 2016 Kabul attack which killed 64 and wounded 347, ranking as one of the deadliest incidents since the 2011 Ashura bombings. In February of this year, the UN released their annual report which documented over 11,000 civilian casualties in 2015 alone, the highest number recorded since UNAMA began tracking the figure in 2009 (See Figure 1).[6] A separate source reported at least 10,000 security and terrorist incidents during 2015.[7]

**Figure 1: Overview of Civilian Fatalities and Injuries January 2009 - December 2015**[8]
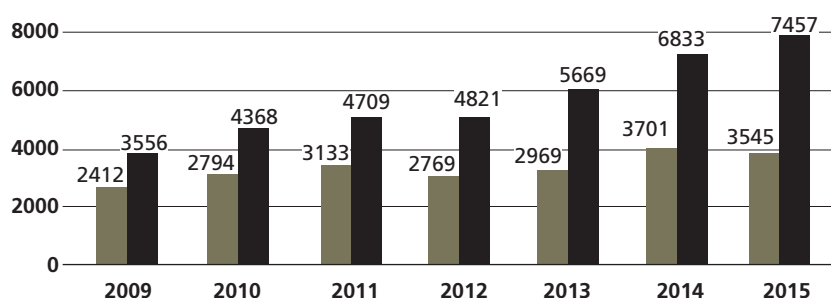


While it is clearly evident that Afghanistan is facing a deteriorating security situation, this is often described from the collective perspective, e.g. as it relates to Afghanistan as a nation state – a broader analysis of the whole country. An oft-neglected angle which is directly relevant to the Afghan exodus is that of personal security; that is, how the conflict is impacting the daily lives of Afghans on an individual level. Each of the participants in this study cited security as a significant push factor, with most reflecting on the increased physical violence in Afghanistan since 2014, the resurgence of the Taliban and the presence of Da'esh

5. SIGAR Quarterly Report 5 January 2016
6. UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2015 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict'.
7. Faridullah, 'Afghanistan Witnesses 10,000 Security, Terrorist Incidents In 2015'.
8. Ibid.

HAMEED HAKIMI AND BARIN SULTANI HAYMON

and Al-Qaeda as particularly damaging. While conducting interviews, it quickly became evident that individual security, rather than war and conflict in Afghanistan more generally, is the central force driving the Afghan exit.

Among our interviews, the account of a single, working mother highlights the desperate circumstances facing many Afghans. The woman described how she is forced to leave her two young daughters in her home in order to work. She lives in Kabul, which until recent years was thought to be relatively insulated from the violence afflicting the more volatile areas of the country.

> *We have been under attack twice and my daughter's leg was injured. There are bomb attacks here and my little girls get very scared. No matter what the situation is or how frightened my daughters have been, in order to work I have locked them in the house and left them alone. I have no choice – I have no one and have no help. When I come home, I open the door and my daughters come running towards me, screaming. The other day there was a bombing in Kabul and my daughters were distraught, crying and screaming... Safety is everything and I want to be safe. While I am eating I hear fighting and bombing. I leave the house and know that there is no guarantee that I will be back. I don't know if I will ever see my children again. I have no guarantee that I will return home to my girls at the end of the day. Even when I do make it home, I have to worry for tomorrow. There is no hope.*

Another of our interviewees had just paid smugglers to facilitate her route to Europe via Iran. She described her decision to migrate as an extremely difficult one, made more complicated by the stigma women face in Afghan society when travelling alone. However, she ultimately came to the conclusion that she had no recourse but to pursue an exit, conveying that her strategy was essentially "anywhere but Afghanistan":

> *Anywhere else would be safer. Life is dangerous here, especially for a woman. Women are the first ones to suffer in this country. That is why I want to get out.*

While both of these interviewees spoke at length about safety in general, for the mother, security was understandably anchored to her children. The other female respondent raises an interesting factor: the effect of gender on security. Afghan women face greater levels of insecurity because of their lower social standing. Women require a male escort in order to transact everyday business in Afghanistan, and they are the first to fall victim to abuse and exploitation where the rule of law breaks down. As has been widely documented, for example, the Taliban have consistently and systematically suppressed the rights of women and applied brutal punishments for any perceived infractions; this if of course in addition to other actors, such as armed militia groups, who are not Taliban but are responsible for violating women's and human rights

Indeed, the quality of life for women in Afghanistan is substandard to that of men, and the degree of risks several orders of magnitude higher. As Abdul Ghafoor, the director of Afghanistan Migrants Advice and Support Organization (AMASO), told us in an interview:

*Afghan females have their own set of complex issues in Afghanistan. Yes, they share the normal burdens of insecurity, joblessness, lack of a future, and others. Separate from that, they also face a lot of harassment, whether in the workplace or even just walking on the street. You see this even in government offices…They are not safe in any place in Afghanistan.*

For all Afghans, beyond the perils of their daily life, their future opportunities have also been hampered severely by the security problem. A 20 year-old male with aspirations for post-secondary education said:

*The security situation in Afghanistan is terrible and our future is not safe; studying is impossible. Our day-to-day life is difficult…the security situation affects everything. If you are not sure about your safety, all other factors are secondary.*

One of our respondents was from an eastern province and is now in the process of claiming asylum in Norway. He described Western Europe with antipathy, but felt he had no choice but to emigrate.

*I don't want to be in Western Europe – I don't like the weather, the bureaucracy and the veiled suspicion by authorities as if I am lying to them. But I had to leave Afghanistan after several kidnapping attempts and attacks on my life and damage to my property. I even went to the NDS [National Directorate of Security, the Afghan intelligence service] for help but they told me there was threat to my life. I have all the documents to prove these claims. If security improves tomorrow, I will be the first volunteer back in Afghanistan.*

For some of our respondents, personal security is a greater risk due to a high profile position held by an immediate family member. While it might be true that any public figure faces an increased threat, regardless of locale, the risk is far greater in Afghanistan because the government's security forces are simply not equipped to deal with the many serious threats in the country. The Afghan government is also engaged active conflict with the armed opposition groups. Kidnapping, torture and violent killings are rampant; judiciaries and other high ranking government officials are specific targets of interest. A 20 year-old male from Kabul said

*My mother is a judge in the Superior Court and because she holds a very important position, she receives a lot of threats - the whole family does. I honestly cannot see how my family can live safely in Afghanistan. There is no security for us here. Her job has created a security issue for the whole family.*

The son of a military general, currently in medical school, said that he is constantly preoccupied with the problem of his personal security. '*My father is a three star general and a high profile person',* he said. *'Whenever I leave the house, I am in constant fear because I am not sure if I will be killed or kidnapped'.*

A former high-ranking government official told us that he had to relocate his family to Turkey because the threats of kidnapping to his children where extremely high in Kabul. He described  a helpless situation whereby even

HAMEED HAKIMI AND BARIN SULTANI HAYMON

additional security measures, such as transport to and from school by armoured vehicle, were not enough to sufficiently mitigate the threat. He now lives alone in Kabul to work in the private sector while his family is based in Turkey; he visits them for few days every month. There are many cases of government officials and business elites who live alone while their families are abroad, often in Dubai and Turkey.

Clearly, the government faces a significant challenge in keeping order when those at leadership and senior positions are under constant threat to their personal safety and security. It is difficult to retain qualified personnel when the threat of physical violence is palpable and constant. These accounts also demonstrate the impact of the security situation in Afghanistan in a practical sense. While civilian casualty numbers are an important broad-based indicator for tracking the security situation in the country, the impact of the degradation of personal security is a less tangible factor which surfaces through individual conversations. The damaging effects of this uncertainty came through immediately in the interviews for this paper.

### Unemployment and Economic Uncertainty

Many of our participants raised the issue of unemployment, in tandem with the lack of future development prospects, as one of the principal contributing factors towards their pursuit of an exit from Afghanistan. Remarkably, most of our interviewees were employed. The exceptions included a university student and a mother whose family had just arrived in Athens after being smuggled out of Afghanistan through Iran. Consistently, however, our interviewees expressed dim views of their future prospects, despite holding a full-time job. This is instructive, demonstrating the nuance that may be lost when considering economic indicators such as unemployment figures. That most of our participants are gainfully employed perhaps raises a challenge to the established notion that Afghans should be broadly considered as economic migrants.

With due regard for the perils of overemphasising headline unemployment figures, it is nonetheless apparent that Afghanistan is currently facing a crisis situation in terms of job loss. A quick glance at the numbers bears this out, illustrating sharp increases in 2014 and 2015. There is no expectation of any relief from this alarming trend in 2016, given the continuing impact of security and economic issues facing the country.[9]

**Figure 2: Afghanistan's Unemployment Rates (%) 2006-2015[10]**
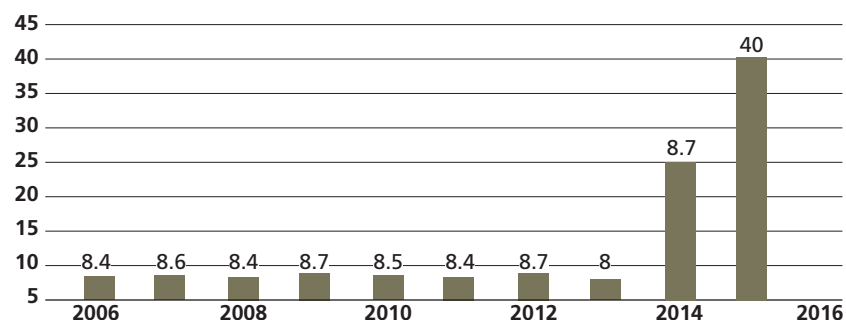
**9.** Tradingeconomics, 'Afghanistan Unemployment Rate | 2006-2016'.
**10.** Ibid.

One substantial explanatory factor in this decline is the withdrawal of foreign military spending and the decline in international aid, although the deteriorating security situation certainly plays a key role as well. Real GDP growth in 2015 was negligible as compared to the growth rates seen over the previous five years, with the limited investment inflows suggesting pessimistic investor sentiment as to the business opportunities in Afghanistan. In a region which, if stable, should be primed for growth, and which has a potentially advantageous geographic position given its proximity to the world's second-largest economy (China), the lack of investment in Afghanistan is a sharp indicator of the current security risk and the impact of the political uncertainty enveloping the country.[11]

Though unemployment was not a common condition among our respondents, where relevant, its impact was life-changing. A mother of an infant child had recently left Afghanistan with her husband in order to pursue a new life in Greece after it became clear that their family-owned business would no longer be able to support them:

> We owned a store, but it was going nowhere. My husband couldn't get any business; there was nothing left for us and we didn't know what to do anymore.

Another of our interviewees, while not directly affected by joblessness, was keenly aware of the desperate state of the job market, remarking that '*there are no job opportunities for Afghans, and currently there are thousands of people without a job'*. While it is obviously no great discovery that unemployment is a devastating problem for those affected, and is a non-starter in terms of financial viability, it is worth pointing out that people who are out of work in Afghanistan are particularly vulnerable, given the absence of a welfare state and lack of adequate humanitarian support in the country from NGOs.

Among the respondents interviewed for this research, however, the larger issue was the lack of economic mobility in Afghanistan, and how this affected their perceptions and hopes for the future. A 20 year-old pharmacy worker who is currently pursuing university-level education identified 'a *lack of long-term prospects for progression and success, particularly if I am unable to continue my education'*. He went on to say of leaving, '*it is very difficult to come to this decision, but what choice do I really have? There is no life here: no money, no education, and no jobs'*. In addition to financial worries, many also expressed concerns around the availability of basic services such as access to healthcare and other infrastructure. A common thread among our respondents was a concern about the availability of opportunities for education, particularly as it related to young people and children.

**Inextricably Linked: Unemployment and Insecurity**

Interwoven with all of the above, however, is the security situation, which is foremost in the minds of Afghans. While it is certainly fair to say that unemployment and a lack of opportunity for economic progression are significant factors, it is also a fallacy to try and unwind these from the broader question of security. As Abdul Ghafoor said via interview:

11. World Bank, 'Afghanistan Development Update'(2016).

HAMEED HAKIMI AND BARIN SULTANI HAYMON

*At the end it is like this: if you have security you will have a job, but if you do not have security you will not have a job. It is a very simple formula. Let's discuss what is causing these people to seek a life elsewhere. What about the lack of investors and businesses? It is all the fear of insecurity.*

Indeed, it is very difficult to draw a line which would delineate where our interviewees' concerns around unemployment and economic progression end and where their anxiety about the security situation, and threat to their personal safety, begins. The two issues are inseparable. A working father said:

*There is no clear understanding of the future – will the Taliban come back? I am worried about the future of my two daughters. Maybe they want to be a doctor or engineer, but now that possibility is insecure. There is no work available for my family in the future, so I want them to leave Afghanistan.*

One of our interviewees abandoned a successful business due to concerns about his personal security, saying '*I owned a successful large-scale business which is now leaderless...but I had to leave Afghanistan after several kidnapping attempts and attacks on my life and damage to my property'.* He is now in Europe in the process of claiming asylum.

The single working mother with two daughters also stated that she wished to leave '*because of my kids and their future, so that they can actually have a future and have something positive to look forward to',* but also noted that she was also concerned about her own future prospects on a personal level as well.

These interlocks between physical and financial security speak to the complexity of the issue of Afghan migration from a policy perspective. A sagging economy is low-hanging fruit as a plausible push factor, but it is reductive to assign undue importance to this by viewing it as separate from the security problem, particularly the threat to personal safety which is difficult to capture through objective analysis of broader security problems in Afghanistan. The two issues combined are major factors which are driving the exodus. These interleaving forces 'make it increasingly difficult to fit migrants into the neat categories policy makers desire for legal purposes, e.g. refugees vs economic migrants'.[12]

### Crisis of Confidence

Most of the interviewees expressed unfavourable opinions of the NUG. This can partly be explained by the many problems it faced before its formation, which included a six-month political stalemate and widespread allegations of voter fraud. Further damaging the government's credibility is the fact that President Ghani and CEO Abdullah have delivered few of the promises they made during the 2014 presidential elections.[13] One respondent stated: '*Ashraf Ghani is lying...He promised to do many things, but he has not and cannot keep his promises'.* Making matters worse, there is widespread belief that the President and his CEO do not get along well; media reports allude to this notion regularly. This 'fracturing' was noted by several of our interviewees, who were quite sceptical of the ability of the NUG to coalesce into a fully functional governing body:

**12.** Schmeidl, 'Going, Going...Once Again Gone? The Human Capital Outflow from Afghanistan Post 2014 Elections'.
**13.** Faridullah, 'Ghani's Top Aide Criticizes NUG For Not Fulfilling Promises'(2016).

*Instead of one president, there are two presidents. It seems that they have created two parliaments; the government has been split in two which has divided the country instead of unifying it, causing many more problems. The situation that they have created is only going to make matters worse in Afghanistan. They are not unified and have caused division, chaos and confusion.*

A matter of higher and more immediate concern that emerged during the interviews, however, is the people's lack of faith in the government's capacity to protect them. As attacks have increased in frequency, Afghans' confidence has eroded to the point of utter resignation, in many cases, and this is a factor in leaving decisions. One of our respondents cited a lack of confidence in the NUG as his overriding push factor, saying '*I decided to leave when the fighting started up again and the government has not done anything about it. They have not been able to provide security for us'.*

The origins of this crisis of confidence can be traced to the handover of security responsibilities to Afghan forces post the NATO drawdown. '*Now that the Afghan forces are fighting on their own',* explains Michael Kugelman, a South Asia expert at the Woodrow Wilson Center, '*it introduces a new vulnerability in the sense that many Afghans don't feel that they would be protected by their own police, by their own military*.[14] Among the interview sample, many of our respondents identified an increased inclination to leave the country around the beginning of 2015, which coincides with the timeline of the NATO withdrawal, and takeover of security responsibilities by the ANSF.

*About a year ago*[15]*, the security situation began worsening and it was at that point that I decided to try and leave as soon as possible. After the NUG was established, the situation declined rapidly in Afghanistan.*

Another respondent attributes the worsening situation to the withdrawal of western forces:

*There is nothing for me here. It is back to bad times, getting worse by the day – Kabul will go back to the Taliban. The situation is getting worse with America and Europe leaving. It is very dangerous and unstable.*

Public unease was further exacerbated when Kunduz was temporarily overrun by the Taliban in September 2015. Labelled a 'military, political and propaganda coup'[16]*,* the fall of Kunduz consolidated negative sentiments among Afghans and laid bare the inadequacies of the government leadership. The first major city overtaken by the Taliban since the arrival of the US-led coalition in 2001, the seizure of Kunduz confirmed the fears of many who view the Taliban to be resurgent and gaining strength, and the NUG ineffectual in stopping it.[17] The recent series of attacks coupled with a severe lack of confidence in the NUG has, expectedly, resulted in a heightened sense of fear for personal security. A respondent reflected on the hopelessness of the situation and the extreme steps Afghans are willing to take to escape: '*the fighting is causing everyone to leave. People are choosing to drown, live in jungles, and risk the lives of their children, all to leave the situation here'.*

In several of the interviews, respondents expressed a hope that the US would continue to provide direct military support on the ground, conveying a belief that Afghanistan will fail if left unto itself. Perhaps this sentiment

**14.** Kugelman, expert interview.
**15.** This interview took place in January 2016.
**16.** Graham-Harrison, 'However Long It Lasts, Taliban Capture of Kunduz Is a Major Blow to Afghan Government' (2015).
**17.** Kutsch, 'Fall of Kunduz Reveals Afghanistan's Security Gaps'(2015).

HAMEED HAKIMI AND BARIN SULTANI HAYMON

best demonstrates the crisis of confidence currently facing the NUG: *I ask America to continue to please help us find peace and to save us from all the problems that we are facing. The country cannot do it by itself.*

## Corruption

Further fuelling the legitimacy crisis is Afghanistan's widely documented corruption problem, the country ranking as the third-most corrupt country worldwide (out of 168 rated).[18] This is readily understood and appreciated as a serious challenge. What is perhaps less understood is the cost of this reputational damage to the government among its most important stakeholder group, the Afghan public. Distrust and scepticism are rampant among the people and this actively undermines the legitimacy and influence of the government, reinforcing a sense of pessimism among our respondents.

There is a lot of distrust in the government – and rightfully so – because the people are treated unfairly. Corruption is rampant and the people, especially the poor, cannot get what is rightfully theirs.

A university student described his struggle finding a suitably affordable institution at which to continue his education and was cynical about his job prospects after graduation.

> *It is nearly impossible to attend a well-known university because it is extremely expensive. Even when you do get in, they do not help you succeed because the whole system, including the administration, is corrupt. Finally, they would not help the students after graduation to find a job. They look out for themselves and their friends. They do not look at your credentials or who is best placed for the job; instead it is all about corruption and getting their friends in.*

The ongoing failures of the government to make reasonable strides in curbing endemic corruption and systemic failures only reinforce the sense of foreboding among Afghans, resulting in a loss of hope as they weigh their future prospects. Corruption is not confined to the government in Afghanistan, however. It is pervasive, present in all areas of daily life. This is one of the main reasons why only looking at economic indicators is insufficient – Afghans in 'good' jobs can be equally exposed to hardships and abuses. Job security is a fluid concept, which can pressure employees into conforming and participating in the patronage system, perpetuating the cycle. Therefore, gainful employment does not necessarily serve as a barrier to leaving, and in some cases can actually serve as an impetus. A government employee explained as follows:

> *Even if one had a job, there is no sense of financial security as one could lose that any day depending on a person's whim. There is a system of corruption in this country and one is forced to participate in it just to scratch out a meagre livelihood There is no sense of trust in the country. Everyone is looking out for themselves in a corrupt way; there is no sense of community and general goodwill among Afghans. Everyone is trying to exploit one another in order to survive and make the best life for themselves.*

18. Transparency International, 'Afghanistan - Country Profiles'.

More than half of Afghans have reported paying bribes to the Afghan National Police (ANP).[19] This is an alarming proportion, highlighting the problem of systemic corruption and offering an instructive snapshot of the transactional dynamics in Afghanistan between the public sector and the people it is presumed to serve. Such arrangements raise the obvious problem of the poor lacking the necessary resources to pay illicit fees for frontline and social services (e.g. support or protection) which should be provided by the government in the first instance.

## Regional Issues

Respondents, including Afghans who had already successfully emigrated, spoke in generalities when asked to describe the decision-making process in targeting destination countries, stating the desire to go somewhere 'safe', 'peaceful' and with a 'future'.[20] The UK, US, Germany and Australia were the most popular choices, with reasons such as personal networks (i.e. family and friends) or an established, well-known Afghan community being the main attractants. In general, all respondents held the Western countries in high regard, believing that these places offered the best chances for a better life. By contrast, Pakistan and Iran have long been refugee destinations and labour markets for Afghans, but are increasingly deemed unsafe or not ideal. One respondent depicted abuse from law enforcement as a deterrent from Iran:

> *Refugees face a lot of problems there… There are a lot of police that are jailing Afghans. They also intimidate, harass, and cause many problems for Afghans...It is very difficult for Afghans to live in Iran.*

Another interviewee described averseness to regional neighbours on the basis of religious discrimination:

> *The situation with Iran is complicated for me. We would not have religious freedom in Iran because we practice a different branch of Islam. Iran is Shia; we are Sunni...Iran is a theocracy. The Islam that we practice would not be accepted there.*

Human rights organisations have extensively documented and repeatedly called for an end to  the systematic discrimination that Afghan refugees face in Iran and Pakistan.[21] In Pakistan, Afghans have faced police harassment, extortion, physical abuse in custody, forced expulsion and other oppressive tactics. Major incidents involving terrorist attacks, such as the Peshawar School bombing in 2014, result in reduced social and educational opportunities for Afghans in Pakistan. The Lahore suicide attacks, similarly, further entrenched anti-Afghan sentiments in Pakistan, as the Pakistani government blame militants based in Afghanistan for orchestrating the attacks.

Afghans in Iran face similar problems, including forced expulsions, denial of access to education, and severe restrictions on employment and residency. Practical conveniences such as ownership of motor vehicles are also prohibited.[22] Both Iran and Pakistan have negatively stereotyped and scapegoated Afghans refugees, shaping public opinion and intensifying the resentment and hostility. As accounts of these injustices have spread

19. 'Asia Foundation: Afghanistan in 2015'.
20.  Almost all respondents mentioned a concern for employment, continuing their education and/or establishing a livelihood for themselves in the host country. This challenges the wide belief that many seek to live off of the welfare programs available in European countries.
21. Human Rights Watch, 'Pakistan' (2016)., HRW, 'Iran' (2016)
22. Hulpachova, 'The Price of an Education for Afghan Refugees in Iran' (2014).

HAMEED HAKIMI AND BARIN SULTANI HAYMON

throughout the Afghan community, it has deeply affected the perception of these countries as tenable destinations. Access to employment is low, future prospects are limited and security is not guaranteed. As such, Afghans see little benefit or prospect in targeting these regional neighbours.

*I do not have much interest in Pakistan and Iran. The reason is because I can't pursue my goals in education in these countries. There is no future for me in these countries either  it's very similar to Afghanistan.*

Another respondent offered similar views:

*I don't want to go to Pakistan or Iran. They are not welcoming to refugees and the police cause a lot of problems. They don't allow Afghans to become educated or to continue their education. They also stop them from developing or progressing in society.*

One of our respondents left Kabul with her family five months ago to move to Iran. However, due to mistreatment and the hardships facing Afghans in Iran, she moved on within three months. At the time of the interview she was passing through Turkey into Greece via a smuggling network:

*In Iran, we face similar problems such as lack of jobs and opportunities…The situation in Pakistan is not any better and we would have dealt with similar issues. For example, just like Afghanistan, Da'esh exists in Pakistan. We thought to take a chance and go to Iran. We thought we would find a job there, which didn't happen.*

Such accounts, as they are relayed home, breed mistrust and wariness of Iran and Pakistan among Afghans, causing them to look beyond their region for a better life.

*Iran and Pakistan are not good places for Afghans. They do not treat Afghans very well and cause a lot of problems for us. You read and hear about it in the news, but also I know many Afghans that have been there, so you hear many stories.*

Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan face many of the same problems and challenges as those in Afghanistan, but are isolated in a place where they are regarded with hostility as foreigners, a situation which has worsened in recent years..This push factor, with the pull of a safer life in Europe and beyond, is forcing Afghans to look for safety outside the neighbouring countries.

**Access to Asylum in Europe**

There are challenges facing the asylum system in Europe, which is not equipped to cope with the complexity and nuances of the migrant 'story'. As Afghans matriculate from one country to the next, their "reason" for leaving Afghanistan, in legal terms, often alters. If they are continuing their journey for economic and social reasons, but were

initially displaced from Afghanistan due to security issues, which tick-box on the immigration chart defines them best? Afghans' migration stories converge and change along the journey, creating a processing conundrum in Europe. The need to retrofit the Afghan story into the rigid classification catalogue set out in the European asylum regulations is an unfortunate limitation of the system, which is unable to offer a true reflection of the circumstances of Afghans. Mona Bentzen, a Norwegian journalist and activist, zeros in on the problem:

> When these people fled Afghanistan initially it was due to war and insecurity, just because they are coming from Pakistan and Iran, does their initial reason change?

The processing issue is exacerbated by the abuses and discrimination that Afghans face in Pakistan and Iran. This highlights the need for further work towards untangling the complexity of Afghan migration.

### Aggregated Reasoning

This study shows the connected complexities of the  Afghan migration story, which is presenting a  challenge to the European asylum system. It is clear that insecurity, economics and corruption are amalgamated into creating the *aggregate reason* of the Afghan exodus. It is simplistic and perilous to pick out one factor in the absence of all the others.  A more useful approach in understanding Afghan migration is to look at it from an 'aggregate' perspective, with reasons that are 'inextricably linked' according to Dr. Liza Schuster, a migration expert at City University London[23].

## POST 2001 AFGHANISTAN

The World Bank has consistently ranked Afghanistan as a 'low income' country where nearly 40 per cent of the population lives under the national poverty line[24]. Living in a landlocked country, mobility and migrations have been part of Afghan history for generations – which also entailed migration and settlement of diverse groups inside Afghanistan, as demonstrated by the ethnic and communal diversity in the country. However, contemporary waves of Afghan refugees into neighbouring countries, predominantly Pakistan and Iran, reached their peak after the Soviet forces entered Afghanistan and the civil war ensued beginning in 1979.[25]

The American-led military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, and the subsequent removal of the Taliban regime from power, presented a unique opportunity for reconstruction and state building in the country. However this opportunity was largely wasted due to, among other factors, the distractions in the Middle East for the US-led international coalition – mainly the war in Iraq – and ignoring embryonic domestic Afghan challenges such as the endemic networks of nepotism and corruption that powerbrokers were weaving in a post Taliban Afghanistan. Nevertheless, as the insurgency-driven conflict intensified in Afghanistan after 2004, Western policymakers attempted to resolve the conditions in Afghanistan through the prism of counterinsurgency

23. Schuster, Expert Interview.
24. 'World Bank, 'Afghanistan l Data (2016)'.
25. Bleuer, 'The Afghanistan Analyst Conflict Bibliography'- provides a glance at the recent publications in English language on the theme of refugees and IDPs.

HAMEED HAKIMI AND BARIN SULTANI HAYMON

(COIN) doctrine.[26] Without much success with COIN, by 2012 the international and donor focus shifted to preparing for the various planned-transitions in Afghanistan. Both the Chicago Heads of States Summit[27] in June 2012 and the Tokyo Conference[28] in July 2012 provided the international community with new frameworks to define its engagement in Afghanistan.

Attaching new conditionality clauses to aid packages, working towards tight deadlines to prepare a 'credible' Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) that would take over security and combat responsibilities from the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) while also preparing for a political transition, all of these goals to be achieved before 2014, put an incredible amount of pressure on Afghan government's partnerships with the international community. The announced withdrawal of US combat forces further undermined confidence among Afghans in the future prospects of the country while allowing the Taliban and other armed opposition groups to simply wait for the end of 2014!

In so many ways, the current disarray over socioeconomic and political conditions in Afghanistan can be partially attributed to 'ill-completed' transitions that were supposed to take place as planned and effortlessly. Not enough attention was paid to how inconsistent and shifting policy priorities, mainly by the international donor community and the United States, could have implications for and contribute to waves of Afghans leaving their country due to eroding confidence levels. The fact that a sudden drop in the levels of aid assistance, and ignoring the fragile political foundations, could have catastrophic impact on Afghans' morale and optimism were fundamentally overlooked.

## Afghanistan's National Unity Government (NUG)

Despite coming to power in September 2014 at a time when Afghans' expectations were extremely high, the NUG has been unable to deliver on key performance indicators such as economy, security, curbing corruption – and establishing a peace process with armed opposition groups. On the domestic side, high expectations of the NUG stemmed from Dr Ghani's election promises, where he was able to mobilise millions of Afghans and campaign as a 'global thinker' and 'fixer' of problems. On the international and regional matters, Afghans' expectations of the NUG were favourable because of seemingly improved relations with both the US[29] and Pakistan, relative to the latter part of Hamid Karzai's presidency. Another element of expectation emanated from a less aggressive domestic political opposition – the Afghan political elite could not offer an alternative to the NUG.

Continued arguments between the political camps of the President and his CEO, Dr. Abdullah, have hindered the government performance; for example, Afghans face record unemployment and record vacancies[30] within government departments simultaneously.

Less than a month after the inauguration of the NUG, on 06 October 2014 President Ghani signed a decree which declared all provincial governors as 'acting' until new governors were appointed[31] with a further confirmation that there would be no prospect for appointments

26. See e.g. Jones (2008) 'Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan'; available online.
27. NATO, 'NATO Chicago Summit 2012'.
28. 'Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework'.
29. President Ghani signed the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the US immediately after his inauguration; previously the Afghan-American relations had been sour due to President Karzai's incessant refusal to sign the BSA
30. Faridullah, 'Thousands Of Govt Positions Stand Empty'.
31. Ruttig, 'The Start into the Better Governance Marathon'.

of the acting governors to new positions. Unfortunately, the appointment of governors has been a laborious process and a significant contributing factor to worsening security and economic conditions in the provinces. Appointments at the cabinet level have also remained dismal; the Afghan ministry of defence is still run by an acting minister.

Where the NUG has performed better, for instance by increasing revenues in 2015[32], the messaging to Afghan citizens has been so poor that such good news is hardly in the public narrative.

**Neighbours: Iran and Pakistan**

Beginning with the Saur Revolution in April 1978, large segments of the Afghan population who felt disaffected with the Soviet-backed communist regime in Afghanistan left for Iran and Pakistan. In the majority of cases, the male members of the refugee families joined Afghan Mujahideen groups.

Shared border, language, culture and religious ties created an expected pull factor towards Iran for many Afghan refugees. For Afghan Mujahideen, and millions of refugees, among other factors (such as a long shared border and large numbers of Pashtuns in Pakistan), the accessibility to resources for training Mujahideen fighters, setting up refugee camps with Western donor support and establishing direct links with American and Western government agencies provided the pull factor towards Pakistan – and incentivised families of Afghan Mujahideen as well as other Afghans to settle in Pakistan as refugees.

At the peak of refugee crisis before 1992, there were over six million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran. When US-led military coalition started bombarding Taliban positions in October 2001, UNOCHA estimated there were at least 3.6 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran while at least over 700,000 were IDPs[33] inside Afghanistan. Despite hosting millions of Afghans for over 3 decades, there is no love for Iran and Pakistan among majority of Afghans including those who lived there as refugees; the sentiments of blame and holding neighbours accountable for the woes in Afghanistan are quite high among ordinary Afghans – and especially high among urban populations. These sentiments came to the fore during the interviews for this research, as discussed already.

Furthermore, in some expert interviews for this paper, the issue of citizenship was highlighted. Increasingly there is awareness among prospective Afghan refugees, and Afghan refugees already in neighbouring countries, that acquiring citizenship should be the ultimate ideal goal. There are no paths to citizenship for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran even if other negative factors are disregarded – Afghans are pragmatically aware of this impediment.

Similarly, regional countries – such as Gulf countries, India, Turkey and Central Asia – do not present a 'pull factor' as there are virtually no routes to legal migration or access to job markets for Afghans. This is a difficulty even for the highly educated Afghans who may prefer legal migration into a regional country rather than aiming for an uncertain future and a dangerous journey towards Europe.

**32.** Byrd and Payenda, 'Afghanistan's Revenue Turnaround in 2015 I United States Institute of Peace'.

**33.** Forced Migration Review (2001) *Afghanistan: Conflict and displacement 1978 to 2001*

HAMEED HAKIMI AND BARIN SULTANI HAYMON

## CONCLUSIONS

The future of the Afghan refugee situation will largely depend on the political stability and economic viability of Afghanistan, which currently leaves much to be desired. The Taliban will also play a central role; the cyclical violence is set to ramp up again during the spring and summer fighting seasons. This will require appropriate resourcing and preparation from the ANSF, which is currently overstretched and seemingly fatigued – as evidenced by the expansion of the Taliban footprint. The success of the Taliban is disheartening to Afghans and undermines the government's legitimacy. As for the role of the government, the functionality of the NUG is a key determiner of political stability. Recent reports of increasing infighting, to the point, reportedly, of the near-paralysis of the NUG are alarming.[34]

The long-standing strenuous relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan will have a direct effect on Afghan migration, particularly in regards to repatriation and the extension of the Proof of Registration (PoR) process. Yet, recent reports that Pakistan is prepared to forcibly expel and demolish Afghans' homes in certain areas are discouraging for Afghans.[35] The lack of economic and settlement opportunities in Iran and Pakistan for Afghans is also linked to a growing youth bulge in all these countries. Nearly 65 per cent of Afghanistan's population (estimated at 31 million) is under the age of 25 – the projections are that the total population in Afghanistan will hit the 50 million mark by 2030.[36] According to CIA's *The World Factbook*, Pakistan's youth-bulge is also enormous with nearly 55 per cent under 25 years of age from a total population of 200 million; in Iran this figure is over 40 per cent from a total population of approximately 82 million people.

Prevailing socioeconomic conditions and growing security problems on the ground in Afghanistan mean that it is highly likely the flow of Afghans out of the country in search of refuge and better lives will continue in the current year and immediate future. Afghanistan's neighbouring countries are plagued by social, political and economic challenges; Iranians and Pakistanis often feature in the statistics of migrations into Europe – demonstrating that Afghanistan's neighbourhood is faced with a distinct kind of 'exodus', though not at same levels as Afghanistan. Therefore, it is tremendously difficult to conceive that either Iran or Pakistan will become abodes of settlement for potential Afghan refugees in the same manner as they did in 1970s and 1980s. The vigorous increase in youth populations across South Asia and Middle East (especially the Gulf states) is contributing to shrinking needs for labour and conducive space for compassionate hospitality of refugees.

In Afghanistan, the prevalent popularity of social media and the plethora of television channels have created an enhanced sense of connectivity with the outside world. Unlike the 1970s and 1980s when a dominant sense of 'defending Islam and motherland' played a central role in people's decisions to leave Afghanistan, the Afghans today – particularly urbanites – are more focused on a fear of an unstable future and not having access to the same levels of 'human security' (personal safety) as the citizens in the Western countries; this is acutely recorded in our fieldwork and interviews.

**34.** Reeves, 'Why Afghanistan Is Once Again On The Brink'(2016)

**35.** 'Khyber Officials Tell Afghan Refugees to Pack up and Leave or Face Stern Action'(2016).

**36.** Cincotta (Nov 2009) 'Could demography save Afghanistan?' – available online

Based on the evidence from our interactions, conversations and research for this paper, it can be argued that due to increased interaction with the forces of globalisation, which also includes contact with the international military and civilian presence since 2001, are more cosmopolitan and aspiring to benefit from the better resources that they feel citizens in securer societies enjoy. Our fieldwork and conversations with Afghans have demonstrated that the aspirations are not aimed solely at better material life, or becoming rich, but rather filling the 'void' that feels quite staggering when the society in Afghanistan is compared to more ideal places, such as Western Europe. Social media, television channels, wider connectivity through transport links – and in some cases the opportunity to travel abroad by air – have amplified that void of personal safety, or human security, intensifying the desire to be 'somewhere safe'.

In light of such complex picture, where more grassroots engagement is required to disentangle the complexities, it is even more imperative that policy makers in the EU do not rely on desk-research alone or on 'cosmetic' field data. Discouraging people, for example in Afghanistan, from leaving their country requires, initially, a comprehensive understanding of the reasons and nuances why people want to leave in the first place. Lazy approaches, such as spending money on billboard adverts in source countries of migration to dissuade people from coming to the West, and simplistic token-advocacy, as in the case of Facebook campaigning, cannot possibly be effective in Afghanistan. If the aim is to better inform the potential leavers about the challenges and difficulties awaiting them in Europe, much more needs to be done beyond producing leaflets, billboards and Facebook groups. For instance, partnership with local organisations to set up information centres for potential leavers – similar to citizens' advice centres – is one useful way forward.

In some ways, the question in EU capitals should not be framed around *'how to stop potential refugees/leavers coming to EU?'*; it would be more appropriate (and realistic) to examine the situation by asking: *'Inevitably, people will find ways to come to the EU due to significant push factors, what could EU countries do in the immediate terms to address this problem after people arrive inside the EU borders; and what could be done as a sustainable medium-to-long term approach to address the push factors in source countries?'* In this regard, the solution certainly does not lie in EU states acquiring signatures from source countries of migration for facilitating deportations. Anecdotal evidence, including in our expert interviews, points to a large number of deportees trying their luck again at getting to Europe.

HAMEED HAKIMI AND BARIN SULTANI HAYMON

## REFERENCES

'Afghanistan | Data'.*World Bank*, n.d. http://data.worldbank.org/country/afghanistan.

'Afghanistan Development Update'. Accessed 1 May 2016. http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2016/04/19/090224b0842a932f/1_0/Rendered/PDF/Afghanistan0development0update.pdf.

'Afghanistan: Harrowing Accounts Emerge of the Taliban's Reign of Terror in Kunduz'. Accessed 4 May 2016. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/10/afghanistan-harrowing-accounts-emerge-of-the-talibans-reign-of-terror-in-kunduz/.

'Afghanistan Needs You', 2015. https://www.facebook.com/AfghanistanNeedsYouOfficial.

'"America's Afghan Refugee Crisis": 15 Years into War, U.S. Urged to Resettle More Displaced Afghans'. *Democracy Now!*, 13 April 2016. http://www.democracynow.org/2016/4/13/americas_afghan_refugee_crisis_15_years.

'Asia Foundation: Afghanistan in 2015.pdf'. Accessed 1 May 2016. http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2015.pdf.

Bleuer, Christian. 'The Afghanistan Analyst Conflict Bibliography', February 2012. https://afghanistananalyst.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/conflictbibliography2012.pdf.

Byrd, William, and Khalid Payenda. 'Afghanistan's Revenue Turnaround in 2015 | United States Institute of Peace', 24 February 2016. http://www.usip.org/publications/2016/02/24/afghanistan-s-revenue-turnaround-in-2015.

Facebook. ' Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations '-*Don't go. Stay with me. There might be no return!"*, 2015. https://www.facebook.com/morr.gov/.

Faridullah, Sahil. 'Afghanistan Witnesses 10,000 Security, Terrorist Incidents In 2015: Report', 13 January 2016. http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/23282-afghanistan-witnesses-10000-security-terrorist-incidents-in-2015-report.

———. 'Ghani's Top Aide Criticizes NUG For Not Fulfilling Promises', 24 March 2016. http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/24382-ghanis-top-aide-criticizes-nug-for-not-fulfilling-promises.

———. 'Thousands Of Govt Positions Stand Empty'. *TOLOnews*, 7 February 2016. http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/23672-thousands-of-govt-positions-stand-empty.

Graham-Harrison, Emma. 'However Long It Lasts, Taliban Capture of Kunduz Is a Major Blow to Afghan Government'. *The Guardian*, 29 September 2015, sec. World news. http://www.theguardian.

com/world/2015/sep/29/taliban-capture-kunduz-major-blow-afghan-government.

Hulpachova, Marketa. 'The Price of an Education for Afghan Refugees in Iran'. *The Guardian*, 5 September 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/world/iran-blog/2014/sep/05/iranthe-afghanistan-refugees.

Human Rights Watch. 'Pakistan: Extend Afghan Refugee Status Through 2017'. *Human Rights Watch*, 16 January 2016. https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/16/pakistan-extend-afghan-refugee-status-through-2017.

Jones, Seth G. 'Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan'. *RAND* 4 (n.d.). http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG595.pdf.

'Khyber Officials Tell Afghan Refugees to Pack up and Leave or Face Stern Action'. Accessed 6 May 2016. http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/05/05/national/khyber-officials-tell-afghan-refugees-to-pack-up-and-leave-or-face-stern-action/.

Kugelman, Michael. Expert Interview, 31 March 2016.

Kumar, Sanjay. 'Young Afghans Come Together to Prevent "Brain Drain"'. *The Diplomat*, 15 October 2015. http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/young-afghans-come-together-to-prevent-brain-drain/.

Kutsch, Tom. 'Fall of Kunduz Reveals Afghanistan's Security Gaps', 30 September 2015. http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/9/30/fall-of-kunduz-reveals-afghanistans-liabilities.html.

Mashal, Mujib, and Ahmad Shakib. 'Taliban Step Up Urban Assaults, Testing the Mettle of Afghan Forces - NYTimes.com'. *The New York Times*, 9 January 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/10/world/middleeast/taliban-step-up-urban-assaults-testing-the-mettle-of-afghan-forces.html?nytmobile=0.

Nader, Alirexza, and Joya Laha. 'Iran's Balancing Act in Afghanistan'. *RAND*, 2011. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2011/RAND_OP322.pdf.

NATO. 'NATO Chicago Summit 2012'. *NATO*, 20 March 2012. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/events_84074.htm.

Reeves, Philip. 'Why Afghanistan Is Once Again On The Brink'. *NPR.org*, 5 May 2016. http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/05/05/475928020/why-afghanistan-is-once-again-on-the-brink.

Ruttig, Thomas. 'The Start into the Better Governance Marathon: Ghani's First Days | Afghanistan Analysts Network', 11 October 2014. https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-start-into-the-better-governance-marathon-ghanis-first-days/.

Schmeidl, Susanne. 'Going, Going...Once Again Gone? The Human Capital Outflow from Afghanistan Post 2014 Elections', 2014.

Schuster, Dr Liza. Expert Interview, 6 April 2016.

Shalizi, Hamid. 'Afghan Defense Minister Nominee Drops out after Two Days'. *Reuters*, 9 April 2015. http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-politics-cabinet-idUSKBN0N01ER20150409.

'SIGAR'. Accessed 7 May 2016. https://www.sigar.mil/about/index.aspx?SSR=1.

'SIGAR Quarterly Report 5 January 2016'. Accessed 1 May 2016. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2016-01-30qr.pdf.

'Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework'. *Council on Foreign Relations*, 8 July 2012. http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/tokyo-mutual-accountability-framework/p28675.

Tradingeconomics. 'Afghanistan Unemployment Rate | 2006-2016'. Accessed 1 May 2016. http://www.tradingeconomics.com/afghanistan/unemployment-rate.

Transparency International. 'Afghanistan - Country Profiles', n.d. https://www.transparency.org/country/#AFG.

UNAMA. 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2015 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2016.

Van Bijlert, Martine. 'The "Zabul Seven" Protests: Who Owns the Grief, and Who Speaks for the Victims | Afghanistan Analysts Network', 12 November 2015. https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-zabul-seven-protests-who-speaks-for-the-victims/.

Voice of America, 'Afghanistan's Other Security Threat: Brain Drain', 07 September 2015

Watkinson, William. 'Six Senior Afghan Commanders Defect from Isis back to Taliban Because Daesh Are "Brutal and Inhuman"'. *International Business Times UK*, 12 April 2016. http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/6-senior-afghan-commanders-defect-isis-back-taliban-because-daesh-brutal-inhuman-1554519.

# GOVERNANCE

- **PREAMBLE: GOVERNANCE & PAKISTAN´S TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY**

  *Senator Sherry Rehman*

- **PAKISTAN: UNGOVERNED SPACE**

  *Raza Ahmad Rumi*

- **THE CONSTRUCTION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF PAKISTAN: THE INSTITUTIONAL WRIT OF THE STATE**

  *Zahid Hussain*

## PREAMBLE: GOVERNANCE & PAKISTAN´S TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

### Senator Sherry Rehman

*President, The Jinnah Institute Islamabad*

As Pakistan transitions from a centrally run federation to a democracy where power is far more diffused than it used to be five years ago, the tackle and task of governance exhibit gaps at multiple levels.

The first and most obvious lag between policy and its execution in Pakistan shows up in the size and heft of the dragnet against terrorism and violent extremism. The space still publicly available to a sizable group of militant outfits roils the national mainstream, but in a parallel dynamic, different levels of action against key groups has clearly begun. In countering this challenge, capacity and sequencing is clearly a regular juggle, but a major obstacle has also surfaced in official reluctance to tackle a critical mass of banned outfits in South Punjab.

What has tipped the military balance, and how long will the federal government negotiate with extremists who regularly hold the national agenda hostage without electoral support to back their demands? The landscape of state intent and action is both patchy and complex. Blowback and resistance to operational recapture of terrain in the tribal areas, particularly North Waziristan, have upped the scale and boom of terrorist audacity across Pakistan. Prior to the launch of coordinated CT operations, challenges to the writ of the government were crosshaired most often in the traditionally weak-governed spaces in Balochistan's border areas, FATA, KPK and pockets of megacity Karachi. Today attacks on soft targets in the cities, especially religious minorities or members of the Shia community, are increasingly the norm. Recurring crises in the shape of spectacular attacks on urban spaces such as the army public school in Peshawar and on Easter Sunday in a park in Lahore epitomize this trend. Kinetic operations, though, remain only one half of the problem. On the whole, political gaps such as limits on the government's capacity to build unity, credible narratives and structures continue to drag policy coherence on a national action plan to counter violent extremism.

Regional tensions add to the challenge. Despite a renewed stated resolve by an increasingly active and high profile military leadership to make no distinction between different types of militant or insurgent, the

problem mutates to paradox with ethnic and border-porosity with Afghanistan. A high degree of pressure from American and Afghan officials to follow a non-confrontational path across the border, including Pakistan's own strategic propensity to not clash with powerful tribes in Afghanistan places Islamabad in a policy bind. While chasing one set of Taliban in Pakistan has become the daily grind of the military, for instance, attempting to reconcile the Afghan Taliban to Kabul is the other. Winning one may represent an existential battle central to Pakistan's survival, but the other mission may well be both thankless as well as fruitless, despite its saliency to regional stability.

At another but equally critical level of governance, new social and structural faultlines have emerged without replacing old ones. Today, nothing in Pakistan can actually work the way it did before devolution, but there is little realization of that in an old-school federal cabinet. The management of diversity or the ability to address extended political grievance does not rank as a priority. From Balochistan's growing alienation, to Sindh's sense of victimization, or KPK's political drift away from national goals as well as exposure to conflict from Afghanistan, there is little sense that "business as usual" cannot continue to be the governance model in Islamabad. The devolution of fiscal and political power has transformed the federal equation between Islamabad and the provinces, but a Punjab-centric federal government has been unable to make the leap needed to manage big institutional transitions. Deficits in using the toolkit of modern democracy such as parliament, its committees, even cabinet and constitutional forums that resolve inter-provincial conflict and allocate resources have hobbled its capacity to govern effectively.

Dangers to the old social contract have arisen not despite, but because of democracy. The governance model needed by a huge country articulating its disparate demands needs time, leadership and evolution. Formal justice delivery remains one of the biggest holes in the system, still locked in post-colonial structures that exclude the tribal areas, while parallel religious bodies bog down human rights reform. The actual executive arm of government at all levels remains the civil service, often paralysed by sclerotic terms of engagement as well as fear of penalties from the politics of accountability and audit, which often take a partisan turn.

Despite the fact that that the public conversation in Pakistan airs a very high level of discontent with state delivery and system transparency, it is also clear that the nuts and bolts of reform repeatedly fizzle down. As public attention and political responses move from issue to issue, governance outcomes often fall to the wayside, trapped in a maze of red tape and inaction. These governance gaps run the gamut from energy debt cycles, police reform and tax mobilization, to health and education reform stalemates. Their existence increasingly reflects laterally in the government's inability to counter the radicalization of the Pakistani street or to address secular anger at elite capture of government resources.

While no silver bullet can untangle the governance gridlock in Pakistan, it is not impossible to interrupt the crisis wheel. If one fundamental shift can be enabled, others may follow in virtuous domino-chains. To make the transformation from a weak but coercive state to a strong

one, Pakistan needs to peacefully channel more public input in national security and regional policy-making than it does today. Parliament might well be the obvious starting point. For a heterogeneous state, with multiple ethnicities competing inside a sharp social pyramid for economic and political power, the only way forward is more democracy. That is the only way such diversity can be managed without conflict.

SENATOR SHERRY REHMAN

**Raza Ahmad Rumi**

*Political Analyst*

E ven after more than six decades since its inception, Pakistan has
been unable to establish its writ across geographical boundaries
and several of its territories remain ungovernable.  Analysts have
noted that such regions comprise nearly 60% of Pakistan's territory.[1]
This phenomenon has consequences for regional stability and affects
peace and governance efforts in neighbouring Afghanistan, Iran, Central
Asian Republics, and India.[2]

The reasons for lack of governance in Pakistan differ across regions.

In some cases, the non-state actors have succeeded in establishing their
own writ, emerging as alternate power centres that have supplanted
the role of the state.  The most notable of these are the Federally
Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Balochistan, Southern Punjab and to
some degree, the mega polis, Karachi.

This paper seeks to examine three such regions, i.e. FATA, Balochistan
and South Punjab, where the authority of the Pakistani state has
diminished to varying degrees and where non-state actors effectively
govern these areas.  In part, this situation is a result of wilful
abdication of authority by the central state (FATA), insurgency and
regional dynamics (Balochistan) and nurturing of militant networks
(South Punjab).  The paper looks at the three regions in some detail,
outlining the historical evolution of governance systems (or lack
thereof) and the current situation, which has serious implications for
Pakistan's security and regional stability.

## 1.  FATA & Areas of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

*Background:*  The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan
form a sub-autonomous tribal region in the northwest of Pakistan,
bordering Afghanistan on its west, Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK)
province on the east and Balochistan on the south.  The area comprises
seven Agencies (tribal regions) and six Frontier Regions.  It is home to
a population of nearly 4.5 million[3], consisting mainly of Pashtun tribes,
who also inhabit eastern parts of Afghanistan.  FATA is also the poorest

*Raza Ahmad Rumi is currently Director
Policy & Programs, the Jinnah Institute,
Islamabad. The views expressed here
are his own. He is also an editor at the
weekly newspaper, The Friday Times,
Pakistan; and a columnist for several
Pakistani and South Asian newspapers*

1.  See for example: "*Al-Qaeda's
    growing 'counter-writ'*" by Khaled
    Ahmed. The Friday Times, November
    26-December 2, 2010 - Vol. XXII,
    No. 41.  http://www.thefridaytimes.
    com/26112010/page2.shtml
2.  Council on Foreign Relations (2011).
    "Should U.S. continue aid to
    Pakistan?" Available at: http://www.
    cfr.org/pakistan/should-us-continue-
    aid-pakistan/p25015
3.  The News. April 8, 2012. Available
    at: http://www.thenews.com.pk/
    Todays-News-6-101821-AJK-Fata-
    GB-capital-population-goes-up-
    many-a-time

of Pakistani regions, where nearly 50% of the population lives below the poverty line. Years of war and insurgency have wreaked havoc with social services and impacted the social and physical infrastructure of the area.

Historically, the colonial state did not build governance institutions in this region and administered it through a curious mix of traditional structures such as *jirga,* overseen by the central British authority through the infamous law, the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR)[4] of 1901. The British used the law as a means of subjugation to 'discipline' the people of FATA and establish the writ of colonial authority across the region. After independence in 1947, the FCR continued as the governance framework - with minor modifications - until 2011, when the Pakistani government initiated major reforms to its scope and application. However, in effect FCR reform is yet to be implemented and one can safely assume that the century-old law prevails.

*Analysis of the present situation:* The FCR is notorious for its repressive features against the people of FATA. It empowers the government to arrest anyone, without specifying the crime, and permits collective punishment of family or tribe for the crimes of individuals.[5] Punishment can be meted out by unelected tribal *jirgas,* whose members are mostly nominated by centrally appointed political agents.[6] The law restricts those convicted from appealing against *jirga* verdicts (although a commission can review a case) and gives sweeping powers to tribal councils to impose penalties in criminal cases. While the FCR does provide a code of conduct for *jirgas*, the latter have operated free of these regulations and have given verdicts not permitted by the FCR. Furthermore, this legal framework encourages discriminatory practices towards the local people, as it allows the government to restrict the entry of FATA residents into the rest of Pakistan. The provisions of the FCR are clearly in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Constitution of Pakistan.[7] There have also been frequent calls from the superior judiciary of Pakistan to repeal the law.

After a century, Pakistan's current democratic government has revised the FCR by introducing pro-democracy amendments and allowing political parties to operate in the tribal regions. The most important amendments to the FCR limit oppressive sections by allowing only close male relatives of offenders to be arrested, instead of whole tribes. Women and individuals of minor age are barred from arrest. The amendments seek to curtail the powers of anachronistic laws by providing basic civil rights to the people of FATA.[8] For the first time, the right of appeal has been granted to the local population against decisions of the political agent.[9] The Political Parties Order of 2002 allowed political parties to form and operate in the region,[10] making room for some form of political participation by people who have enjoyed few or no constitutional rights.

The amendments were welcomed by civil society and hailed as a step towards incorporating FATA within the democratic framework of the rest of the country.[11] However, they are yet to be fully implemented. Some tribal elders and lawyers have criticised the minor changes, demanding that the jurisdiction of high courts and the Supreme Court must be extended to FATA and that the area should be governed according to the 1973 Constitution, rather than the FCR.[12]

4. HRCP (2005). FCR: A Bad Law Nobody Can Defend/ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Available at: http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/FCR%20Report.pdf
5. Yusufzai, R. (2001). "*Analysis: Pakistan's Tribal Frontiers*". BBC News. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1711316.stm
6. Rehman, I. A. (2002). "*Dark Justice*". Newsline. Available at: http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2002/08/dark-justice/
7. HRCP (2005).FCR: A Bad Law Nobody Can Defend. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Available at: http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/FCR%20Report.pdf
8. Yusufzai, A. (2011). "Democracy Follows Drones in Pakistan". Al-Jazeera. Available at: http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/08/201182573132986205.html
9. Dawn.com. August 13, 2012. Available at: http://dawn.com/2011/08/13/major-changes-made-in-fcr-fata-people-get-political-rights/
10. Understanding FATA: 2011. Available at: http://www.understandingfata.org/uf-volume-v/Understanding_FATA_Vol-V-11.pdf
11. The Express Tribune. August 13, 2011. Available at: http://tribune.com.pk/story/230500/initial-impressions-mixed-reactions-to-fcr-changes/
12. Pakistan Today. February 14, 2012. Available at: http://www.pakistan-today.com.pk/2012/02/14/news/national/changes-in-fcr-condemned-in-seminar/

The colonial-era administrative and judicial systems are unsuited to modern governance. The absence of credible and formalised participation and accountability has created governance gaps, giving freedom of activity to illicit actors. Weak state control has given rise to radicalisation and enabled local militants to establish parallel, Taliban-style policing and court systems across the tribal agency.[13] The anomalous constitutional status and political disenfranchisement has turned FATA agencies into sanctuaries for sectarian and international terrorists, thereby making the region a hub of the arms and drug trade.

Reportedly, the FATA region is home to several pro al-Qaeda militant groups such as the *Haqqani* Network (Afghan Taliban), *Tehrik-e-Taliban* and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's *Hizb-e-Islami*.[14] These groups have important links with militants on the other side of the Durand Line (Pakistan-Afghanistan border) and the porous boundary facilitates this mutual interaction and cooperation.

There are three major geographic zones of militancy afflicting the FATA region.[15] Towards the south, Mullah Omer's Quetta *Shura* directs militants to the Afghan provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, which also borders the Pakistani province of Balochistan. Further north, the *Haqqani*-directed Miram Shah *Shura* takes on the insurgency in the Afghan provinces of Paktika, Paktia and Khost provinces from the North and South Waziristan agencies in Pakistan (two rabid militant hotbeds in the region). Towards the region's north, several groups of militants including Gulbuddin Hekmetyar's *Hizb-e-Islami* direct insurgent activity to Nangahar and Kunar provinces in Afghanistan, operating from FATA's Mohmand and Bajaur agencies.

In spite of attempts to cluster militant activity as above, the segmentation is not fixed. The militants' universe is extremely dynamic and complex. Localised militant groups continue to coalesce and degenerate – making and breaking alliances on the basis of ideology, history and operational capability.[16] In any case, analysts agree on three major, discrete militant groups operating in FATA: the *Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan*, the *Haqqani* Network and the Quetta *Shura*.

Of these three, the *Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP) is the largest coalition of militant groups and has the broadest geographic scope. The TTP is a grouping of individual "leaders", largely from Mehsud region of Waziristan, with associates such as Tariq Afridi (Khyber), Maulvi Faqeer Mohammad (Bajaur), Omar Khalid (Mohmand) and Waliur Rehman (S. Waziristan). *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* is also a partner of TTP. These groups have strong links with foreign militants of Al-Qaeda and Central Asia, and frequently organise attacks on the Pakistani state. The other major group, the *Haqqani* Network, reportedly operates from North Waziristan and is led by Jalaluddin and Sirajuddin Haqqani. The group focuses on attacks on Afghanistan and has important links with the Arab Al-Qaeda. The group has entered into negotiations with the Pakistani state and has generally avoided armed confrontations with them.[17] It also has strongholds in North Waziristan, where its sanctuaries have been relatively protected from Pakistani military operations.

As noted above, the third militant coalition in FATA is Mullah Omer's Quetta *Shura*. The Shura emanates from the region including and

**13.** International Crisis Group (2006). Pakistan's Trial Areas: Appeasing the Militants. Available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/125-pakistans-tribal-areas-appeasing-the-militants.aspx

**14.** Fisherman, B. (2010). Muddying the 'Taliban'. Foreign Policy. Available at: http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/11/muddying_the_taliban

**15**. Fisherman, B. (2010). The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict across the FATA and NWFP. New American Foundation, p. 3. Available at: http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/fishman.pdf

**16.** Ibid., p. 28

**17.** Burke, J. (2012). "*Al-Qaeda leadership almost wiped out in Pakistan, British officials believe.*" The Guardian. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/25/al-qaida-leadership-pakistan-africa

RAZA AHMAD RUMI

surrounding the Balochistan provincial capital of Quetta and extends to southern Afghanistan and FATA. Apart from the three major coalitions, there are other militant groups present in FATA as well. The most notable of these are Mangal Bagh's *Lashkar-e-Islam*[18] and its competitor *Ansar-ul-Islam*[19] in the Khyber Agency. The latter sub-region borders the province of KPK and enables the militants to infiltrate into the urban and settled areas of the province.[20]

The efforts of the Pakistani government to contain insurgency in FATA have alternated between the use of excessive force, and appeasement. Measures to seek accord with militants have been only partially successful.[21] They have absolved the militants of government scrutiny by retreating, giving weapons to tribesmen, and disbanding security check posts in return for the militants' agreement to give up violence. The government reached accords with the militants of South Waziristan in May 2004 and with those in North Waziristan in September 2006. These accords were facilitated by the pro-Taliban *Mutahidda Majlis-e-Amal*, a six-party religious alliance and the Musharraf government's coalition partner, in the provincial governments of Balochistan and KPK. According to reports, the accord facilitated the growth of militancy in the region and gave pro-Taliban elements a free hand to recruit, train and arm.[22]

The growth of militancy was also facilitated by badly run military operations, poor governance and stalled economic development during times of unrest. As FATA has been a neglected region in terms of socio-economic development, unemployed youth became susceptible to recruitment by militant outfits after the US invasion of Afghanistan. They found themselves stuck in between the military operations and the militant organisations.

After 2007, the situation in FATA was further aggravated when the people of Kurram Agency had conflicts on sectarian lines. Kurram agency has a Shi'a majority in the north (Parachinar) that was unable to flee fighting in 2007 since it would require them to pass through Sunni-majority enclaves in order to reach settled areas of KP province.[23] The region presents a complex pattern of terrorist and sectarian activity that threaten local populations, regional stability and counter-terrorism efforts in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Sunni-Shi'a conflict – a trend that first emerged in the 1980s - has become endemic in several parts of the tribal agencies. In Hangu and Parachinar, sectarian strife took shape of virtual tribal civil war over time, with "*free use of missiles, mortars and rocket launchers*".[24] The assassination of *Sipah Sahaba* leader Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi in 1990, which avenged the murder of Shi'a *Tehrik-e-Nifaz Fiqh Jafriah* leader Allama Arif Hussain al-Hussaini in 1986, was a turning point in the conflict. Following 9/11, members of Sunni extremist groups such as SSP and *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* allied themselves with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban and aided in operations in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Simultaneously, the religious cleansing of Shi'as continues to occur and the Shi'a-majority areas have become the focal point of attacks by Sunni extremists.

The United States ignored the widening sectarian divide in FATA and followed a rather independent policy in the region. The strategy is focused largely on: (i) weakening Taliban leadership in Waziristan; and

18. Lashkar-e-Islam (LI), formed in 2004 by Mufti Munir Shakir, is a Sunni-Deobandi Islamist group that is chiefly concerned with the implementation of Sharia through the use of force in Khyber Agency. After the expulsion of Mufti Sahab by tribesman from Khyber agency in February 2006, the control of LI was handed over to Mangal Bagh

19. Pir Saif ur-Rehman, an Afghan national and Barelvi Sunni preacher, founded the Ansar-ul-Islam (AI) in the Bara sub-division of Khyber Agency in 2004. Ansar-ul-Islam (AI) aims to propagate the Barelvi form of Sunni Islam. After severe clashes with Lashkar-e-Islam in 2006, Saif Ur Rehman was also expelled from Khyber and subsequently the leadership of AI was taken over by Maulana Gazi Mehboob ul-Haq.

20. Imtiaz Ali. Khyber Tribal Agency: A New Hub of Islamist Militancy in Pakistan. Available at: http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4952

21. International Crisis Group (2006). Pakistan's Trial Areas: Appeasing the Militants.

22. International Crisis Group (2006). Pakistan's Trial Areas: Appeasing the Militants.

23. International Crisis Group (2010). Pakistan: The Worsening IDP Crisis. Available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/b111%20pakistan%20-%20the%20worsening%20idp%20crisis.pdf

24. The Economic Time – March 1st, 2012. Available at: http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-03-01/news/31113592_1_shias-kurram-ahmadis

(ii) protecting US and NATO interests in the region. The US policy-setters have viewed the use of drone strikes as an effective tool to weaken Al-Qaeda and affiliated Taliban insurgents. According to security expert Emma McEachan, "*drone attacks have worked and brought remarkable results ...Pakistanis have been cooperative, but quiet.*" At the same time, it is also recognised that there were serious limitations on how to verify targets as the US relies on "*local agents rather than forensics.*" To quote McEachan: "*Drone attacks obviously come with costs, but they are the best of a bad set of options.*"[25]

After providing tacit support for the drone strikes, Pakistani leadership – both civilian and military – has recently started to resent these attacks. Pakistan's political parties whip up anti-Americanism using the drone strikes as a cause for garnering popular support against a foreign power. On the other hand, a poll conducted by the Aryana Institute in the tribal areas shows the local people support drone strikes.[26] Ironically, a Pakistan Army commander stationed in FATA and fighting Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and other militants, told the media that drone attacks were helpful.

During the past six years, drone strikes have focused on two regions: North and South Waziristan. However, this trend has also undergone changes. For instance, in 2009, 42 percent of the strikes took place in North Waziristan and 51 percent in South Waziristan. During 2010, 89 percent of the strikes targeted North Waziristan and 6 percent South Waziristan. "*Of the 292 strikes since 2004, 69 percent have hit targets in North Waziristan, and 26 percent have hit targets in South Waziristan.*"

In June 2004, the first-ever US drone attack killed Nek Muhammad Wazir in Wana, South Waziristan. Thereafter, drone attacks have killed key militant leaders from al-Qaeda such as Baitullah Mehsud (Aug 2009), Ilyas Kashmiri (June 2011), and Atiyah Abd al-Rahman (August 2011). A few Pakistani writers have written how "*drone attacks have killed more enemies of both Pakistan and the US than ground offensives or any other strategy attempted since 9/11.*[27] Nevertheless, drone strikes and military operations by the Pakistani Army are only short-term measures, which can bring little change to the problems of FATA.

A key solution to the problems of militancy, governance and extremism in FATA is through working towards building rule of law institutions and extending civil and political rights to the local people. The government must eliminate the undemocratic system of patronage sustained by powerful political agents who encompass all the legislative, judicial and executive powers to establish control.

The uncontrolled militant activities in FATA, along with the sectarian dimension in Kurram Agency, present a complex situation for regional stability. There has been talk in Pakistani establishment circles that India and external powers have expanded their influence in Afghanistan and are involved in fuelling militancy in FATA.[28] On the other hand, the Shi'a-Sunni proxy conflict, which is part of the larger conflict between Saudis and Iranians[29], has outpoured deeper into FATA and parts of Balochistan and has rendered instability to the entire region.

25. "Moaning about drones", Khaled Ahmed, The Friday Times, May 18-24, 2012. http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta3/tft/article.php?issue=20120518&page=2
26. Chishti, A. K. (2012). "*The best of a bad set of options*", The Friday Times. Available at: http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta3/tft/article.php?issue=20120518&page=4
27. "*Moaning about drones*", Khaled Ahmed, The Friday Times, May 18-24, 2012. http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta3/tft/article.php?issue=20120518&page=2
28. Abbas Hassan, President Obama's policy Options in FATA. Available at: http://www.ispu.org/files/PDFs/fata_report.pdf
29. Aziz Khalid, "Drivers of extremism in FATA and KP." Available at:

RAZA AHMAD RUMI

Ascertaining the exact quantum and scope of foreign involvement in FATA is difficult.  There is little or no access for outside journalists to visit the region.  In fact there has been a series of abductions and killings of journalists in the region.  Local information is controlled and only a state-friendly narrative exists.  This is most relevant to the drone strikes in FATA.  Regardless of their innate illegality, the reaction to the drones so far shows a serious cleavage: local voices  echo a different version of reality than what the state and mainstream media want Pakistanis to believe.  A Norway-based Pakistani scholar, Farhat Taj, has been most vocal about this.  Her research challenges the claims about the deep unpopularity of drone strikes in FATA.  Her recent book mentions the Peshawar Declaration (December 2009) signed by political parties, including the ANP, civil society organisations, businessmen, doctors, lawyers, teachers, tribal labourers, and intellectuals of FATA and NWFP, following a grand tribal *jirga* in Peshawar, stating: '*If the people of the war-affected areas are satisfied with any counter-militancy strategy, it is drone attacks that they support the most*'.[30]

On the ground, contrary to the assumption by many international commentaries, FATA has become such a cesspool of local, regional and global interactions that it can no longer be 'controlled' by a single entity. This also holds true for Pakistani military and intelligence agencies.  At the same time, there is a dire need of securing and building peace in FATA to start the two vital tasks neglected by the Pakistani state for six decades: (i) development of the area and (ii) concurrent work on state-building.  If these tasks are not accomplished, then FATA's instability will not end even after the US/NATO withdrawal in 2014. Regional stability and economic development will depend on the normalisation of  the situation in FATA.

It is time for the Pakistani state to undertake a policy shift.

First, it needs to acknowledge that keeping regions, such as FATA ungoverned by choice violates international human rights covenants and the Pakistani Constitution as well.  FATA's ungovernable state is impacting the entire country with militants from the Punjab and other parts of Pakistan present there.  Taxes and electricity bills cannot be collected, there are virtually no institutions of participatory and accountable governance, and in order to occupy traditional leadership the militants have killed thousands of jirga leaders and members.

Second, Pakistan must organise a referendum or put into place a mechanism to ascertain what the local population wants: integration into the KPK province or the creation of  a separate FATA province.  The former option is the most natural and cost effective given that majority of people of FATA are Pakhtuns who share the same culture, identity and clans. Extension of the criminal justice system and other institutions from KPK will enable the state to reclaim the ground lost to the non-state actors.

Pakistan's civilian President Zardari has spoken about a Marshall Plan equivalent for this region.  The proposition has drawn scorn because of his tainted past and that is why nobody has given it  serious consideration. The international community and Pakistani authorities must pay heed to this ambitious but eminently desirable goal.  FATA simply cannot be allowed to remain a poor, stateless zone with no human rights in the twenty first century.  It is inimical to Pakistan and the region's peace.

30. .Taliban and anti-Taliban  by Farhat Taj (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2011); page 19.

**Pakistani and Afghan Districts**

Areas connected by insurgency
Focus of US and NATO Drone Attacks (2006-2012)

**Southern Punjab**

Main Roads

Areas connected by insurgency
Durrand line
Focus of US and NATO Drone Attacks

## 2. Balochistan

*Background:* The continued insurgency in Balochistan is a mix of historical blunders, centralisation and marginalisation of the Baloch people.

Balochistan is the largest of four provinces of Pakistan. It covers 43 percent of the country's total area and hosts 6 percent of its population. The population density is low and the major ethnic groups inhabiting the province are Baloch (54.7 percent) and Pashtun (29 percent) among others. Balochistan is the least developed province of Pakistan, although it is rich in mineral and energy resources. The province is strategically located: bordering Afghanistan to the north and Iran to the west. It lies on communication routes to South, South West and Central Asia. The region provides for 40 percent of Pakistan's energy needs and accounts for 36 percent of its total gas production. Yet, 46.6 percent of its households have no electricity. The region is rife with conflict and is undergoing a secessionist struggle between the Pakistani establishment and the Baloch nationalists.

RAZA AHMAD RUMI

Since the twelfth century, Balochistan has been inhibited by short-lived tribal confederacies. During the seventeenth century, the Ahmedzai tribe formed a tribal confederacy in Kalat region and gained the support of most major Baloch tribes. Following the British colonisation of the sub-continent, the British exerted influence over the region and divided parts of Balochistan to ease control. Western Balochistan was given to Iran in 1871 and a portion of the north ceded to Afghanistan after the Durand Line was drawn in 1893. The British sought to maintain the loyalty of Baloch tribes by granting subsidies to tribal chiefs and providing them with a certain degree of autonomy as long as they acquiesced to the imperial directives.

Following independence, the Pakistani authorities sought to continue British policy of designating territories to handpicked tribal chiefs. The chiefs were allowed to maintain control as long as they did not defy state procedures. Overall, Pakistan's strategy of establishing central control over the region was largely based on coercive measures.[31] The first military action against the Baloch was undertaken in 1948, when the Pakistani military ousted the ruler of Kalat and forcibly annexed the state.

Historically, relations between the federal government and the province have been tenuous, characterised by dependence of the province on federal transfers as the mainstay of its budgetary and development needs. This situation is confounded by the popular perception that Balochistan does not receive its due from the energy revenues - primarily natural gas - that are managed by the federal government under the 1973 Constitution.[32] Local governance is characterised by tribal ethos and ethnic factionalism. The entry of the regions that constitute the province of Balochistan into what was envisaged as the territory of Pakistan was a result of protracted negotiations between Pakistan's founding elites and their counterpart tribal elders.[33] The process of "national" integration, however, was far from smooth; and the bottled up pressures again came to light when the Bhutto administration (1971-77) dismissed the elected provincial government and launched a military operation against the nationalist "insurgents" that was ended through a political settlement by the subsequent military regime in 1977. The federal writ prevailed but the strong influence of federal pulls was recognised as a political reality resulting in bargains between tribal elites and the federal power centres.

*Analysis of the present situation:* The four major insurgencies in Balochistan during the post-partition period occurred in 1948, and between 1958-59, 1963-69 and 1973-77. There is a fifth ongoing insurgency that was ignited in August 2006 following the murder of Baloch tribal leader Nawab Akbar Bugti, who ironically was considered as a federalist politician.[34] The ongoing insurgency started in Marri-Bugti and Mekran (southern) areas, and since then the military operations have resulted in huge human and property losses and stark violation of human rights by the state, as well as by the insurgents.[35]

Balochistan's administration system is a hybrid of formal and informal systems. Only five percent[36] of the provincial territory is governed by formal policing. Law and order in the remaining 95 percent of the province is managed by a system of "levies" recruited from the local tribes, who provide security services through a mix of tribal norms and

**31.** International Crisis Group (2006). Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan. Available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/119_pakistan_the_worsening_conflict_in_balochistan

**32.** The Constitution of 1973 was by and large a consensus federal arrangement. It provided for considerable provincial autonomy but the control over natural resources was retained by the Central government. Provinces were to get royalties in exchange of natural resource exploitation.

**33.** The Baloch are divided across the Western Asian region: Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. We are however concerned with the area that is now a part of Pakistan. For detailed discussions on the ethnic nationalist conflicts see Paul Titus (2002) Marginality and Modernity: Ethnicity and Change in Post-Colonial Balochistan, Oxford University Press, Karachi; and Paul Titus and Nina Swidler (2002) "*Knights, Not Pawns: Ethno-Nationalism and Regional Dynamics in Post-Colonial Balochistan*" in International Journal of Middle East Studies (2000), 32: 47-69 Cambridge University Press.

**34.** Khurram Iqbal. Counter-Insurgency in Balochistan: Pakistan's Strategy. Available at: *www.san-pips.com/download.php?f=pvt0004.pd*

**35.** Dr. Mansoor Akbar Kundi. Insurgency factors in Balochistan. Available at: http://www.asc-centralasia.edu.pk/Issue_64/07_Insurgency_Factors_in_Balochistan.html

**36.** Government of Balochistan. Development Statistics of Balochistan 2001-02, Bureau of Statistics.

quasi-official procedures. Levies are primarily state-funded private armies of tribal chieftains. The tribal system with its archaic social structures and a justice system controlled by the tribal elite[37] had long made the formal rule of law framework irrelevant for most of the population. Such a system obviously perpetuates a high degree of conflict and insecurity – thereby leaving the poor communities distant from the 'formal' state.

In general, the perception is common that provincial governments are extensions of central patrimonies. The beneficiaries of central largesse, over the decades, have been the tribal chieftains who have continued to enter into patron-client relationships with most of the central governments.

Balochistan's ethnic complexion lends additional complexity to this quandary. Further, these communities are concentrated in different regions: those in the South are predominantly Balochi-speaking, while, almost all of the province's Pushto speakers are concentrated in northern and eastern districts. These patterns are also reflected in the composition of the provincial legislature, the civil service and the allocations for development. Competition over resources and polarisation at the provincial level is a well-established trend.

Tribal norms and customs provide the parameters of conflict resolution and tribal leadership becomes synonymous with political leadership. The tribe acts as the institution for organising intra-group collective action, on the one hand, while simultaneously defining the boundaries of the group, on the other. Social inclusion and social exclusion, therefore, are delineated along the lines of tribal affiliation. The tribal systems sustain strong patriarchal norms concerning the rights of women, their access to resources and spaces and their participation in social and political life. There is close inter-linkage between patriarchy and tribalism.

The provincial government in Balochistan is isolated and has been dysfunctional in critical areas. Decision-making related to law and order and major governance issues rests largely in the hands of central military and intelligence agencies, and the paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC). The latter has in fact been calling the shots and is right now under severe criticism for its alleged excessive and arbitrary handling of Balochistan. The situation was exacerbated by the nationalist parties' boycott of the elections of 2008, as a result of which they lack representation in the state structure and remain on the fringes of the political process. The nationalist forces, which belong to the Pashtun and Baloch communities, lack representation in the provincial or national assemblies. This has created a vacuum in the political system that has been filled by the civil military bureaucracy.

The weak local government structure is marred by widespread corruption and inefficiency. A report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in 2009 identifies 140 million rupees in bribes given to the provincial minister for development.[38] Almost all 64 members of the provincial assembly have been receiving Rs250 million each year in the name of development funds since 2009. The net transfers from the centre to the province under the Balochistan Rights Package have averaged almost Rs100 billion annually since 2009, but its impact is hardly visible, because of massive financial corruption.

37. The police-levies divide was mediated through a non-uniform system of justice based on a procedural exception to the criminal procedure code in the "B" or non-police areas. The multiplicity of judicial systems devalues the quality of justice, adds difficulties in seeking redress and aggravates problems of access.
38. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2009). Pushed to the wall: Report of the HRCP fact-finding mission to Balochistan. Available at: http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/Pushed%20to%20the%20wall.pdf

RAZA AHMAD RUMI

Power remains in the hands of military and intelligence agencies whose overbearing presence has severely hampered the political process. The excesses committed by the establishment have alienated the Baloch people and set forth a deep-rooted nationalist movement within the population. It has also led to the formulation of armed resistance and insurgencies in the region that have sparked a dangerous trend of violence.

The insurgency in Balochistan has roots in the vast inequalities that the Baloch people have suffered since the inception of Pakistan. Paradoxically, the province is rich in mineral resources and provides critical energy supplies to distant urban centres in Pakistan, and yet it suffers from massive unemployment, poverty and lack of infrastructural development. Target killings, sectarian violence and hit-and-dump operations have become commonplace, due to the ongoing conflict between the nationalist forces and the establishment, indicating a near breakdown of law and order in Balochistan. There exists widespread animosity against the Pakistani state in Balochistan.

The nationalist forces such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) have empowered themselves by appropriating commissions from the local business community and mine owners, enabling their factions and setting the ground for rampage. This cycle of violence has severely hampered governance in Balochistan. Religious and ethnic minorities, including the local Hindu and Hazara communities have suffered the worst. Over 60 people from the Hazara community have fallen victim to targeted attacks in the first half of 2012.[39] Estimates suggest that more than 800 members of the Hazara community have been killed in mass murders and targeted ambushes since 2001.[40] Sunni extremist groups such as *Lashker-e-Jhangvi* have claimed responsibility for many incidents targeting Hazara Shi'as. The communities allege that security agencies are complicit in the ethnic cleansing of the province, and indeed, evidence exists to support this claim.[41]

The province is reportedly also home to the Quetta *Shura* - a Taliban leadership council operating primarily from the provincial capital Quetta and headed by Mullah Muhammad Omer.[42] The *Shura* forms one of the key opposition forces to Western troops in Afghanistan and operates not from tribal areas, but from the populated regions in and around Quetta. The *Shura*, according to some analysts, has a significant role to play in the Afghan insurgency. The existence of the council is believed to be the result of the relocation of the Afghan Taliban leadership from its historical base in Southern Afghanistan across the border to Quetta.[43] The 1200-km long, largely porous and unpatrolled border between Balochistan and the Afghan provinces of Kandahar, Zabul and Helmand facilitates militant infiltrations. Significant numbers of Western forces are stationed in these provinces and there are frequent complaints of the Taliban being supplied in men, weaponry and bombs from Balochistan. The Afghan Taliban council allegedly operates openly in Quetta, with little interference from Pakistani authorities.

Resolution of the Balochistan conflict requires building political consensus among the Baloch people by addressing their grievances and establishing the government's writ across the province. Successive central governments have initiated development projects and restructuring programmes to give

**39.** DAWN – July 29, 2012. Available at: http://dawn.com/2012/06/29/60-hazaras-fall-victim-to-terrorism-this-year/

**40.** DAWN – July 29, 2012. Available at: http://dawn.com/2012/06/29/hope-fades-away-for-hazaras-of-pakistan/

**41.** Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2009). Pushed to the wall: Report of the HRCP fact-finding mission to Balochistan, p.6. Available at: http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/Pushed%20to%20the%20wall.pdf

**42.** Walsh, D. (2009). "*Strategic Balochistan becomes a target in war against terror*". The Guardian. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/dec/21/us-taliban-balochistan-strategy-pakistan

**43.** Ahmed, M. (2009). "*Taliban Commander: We're fighting for "independence*". NBC News. Available at: http://worldblog.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2009/11/18/4376958-taliban-commander-were-fighting-for-independence

the province its due, but the initiatives have been only partially successful. The failure has been primarily because of an absence of initiative to grant the local people their due political rights. The Balochistan Rights Package, which was a set of comprehensive proposals put forward by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government in November 2009, also failed to deliver for the same reason.[44] Out of a total of 61 proposals, only a few could be delivered and the rest have not been implemented even as the regime's tenure draws to a close. The rationale for an economic package makes little sense in the absence of political rights. The economic package is unlikely to solve the crisis, unless the issues of political autonomy, control over administrative resources and administrative freedoms are fully addressed.

During President Musharraf's rule, economic development and the use of force to tackle insurgency were two of the most emphasised aspects of policy on Balochistan.[45] The government initiated a number of "mega projects" such as the Gwadar deep-sea port, the Mirani Dam, the Subakzai Dam, the Coastal Highway, road networks and potable water projects for Quetta and other cities. However, there have been reports that the government projects contributed to rising marginalisation fears among the Baloch, who feared becoming a minority in their own land if the central government's plans succeeded.[46] Due to decades of underdevelopment, the province lacks skilled human capital and the execution of mega projects requires the influx of labour from the more affluent Punjab and Sindh. The Baloch, already feeling colonised by outsiders especially by the largest province of Pakistan – Punjab - felt dispossessed by these projects and some groups, particularly ones with nationalist leanings, began to actively oppose them.

Following the elections of 2008, the PPP government announced the National Finance Commission award (which has increased Balochistan's development budget threefold) and the Balochistan Rights Package, to calm the rising tide of militancy in the province. Despite these efforts, the government has been unable to consistently deliver in Balochistan and the situation on the ground remains volatile. The provincial administration has increasingly ceded control to intelligence and security agencies, in order to contain the rising violence and insurgency in the area.

The province remains '*an active volcano that may erupt anytime*'.[47]

The stability of Balochistan affects regional players such as Iran, India and Afghanistan. Balochistan is a region of high geo-political importance and the land is rich in oil, gas and mineral deposits. Balochistan is also one of the feasible routes of energy trade from the Central Asian States (CAS), particularly Turkmenistan, which ranks fourth worldwide - after Russia, the United States and Iran - in natural gas reserves.[48] There are reports of US Congressmen eyeing an independent Balochistan, in order to contain China and Iran from becoming maritime powers.[49] The development of the Gwadar port also promises to provide a land connection between Western China and the Indian Ocean. Iran is in the process of laying a pipeline to Pakistan through the Baloch territory – a project that places significant Western diplomatic pressures on the Pakistani administration.

The geo-strategic location of Balochistan, being close to the oil lanes of the Persian Gulf and having a common border with Iran and Afghanistan

44. Center For Research and Security Studies (2011). Balochistan Rights' Package 2009: Impact on Baloch Nationalism. Available at: http://crss.pk/beta/?p=2085
45. Iqbal, K. (2008). Counter-agency in Balochistan: Pakistan's Strategy, Outcome and Future Implications. Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies
46. Special Balochistan Report (March 2012). Media Point. Available at: http://www.mediapoint.pk/special-balochistan-report-march-2012/
47. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2009). Pushed to the wall: Report of the HRCP fact-finding mission to Balochistan, p.5
48. Though these are largely unexplored, the resource base range is estimated to be as high as 535 trillion cubic feet. In addition, the country possesses 1.4 billion barrels of proven oil reserves: http://www.american.edu/projects/mandala/TED/turkmen.htm
49. Walsh, E. (2012). "*Should the US Support and Independent Balochistan?*" Al-Jazeera. Available at: http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/02/201222112203196390.html

RAZA AHMAD RUMI

along with a deep sea port at Gwadar, makes the region important to the interests of India, Russia, Afghanistan, Iran and China.

According to the well-known security analyst Shuja Pasha "*India and the UAE (reputedly due to the opposition to construction of the Gawadar port) were funding and arming the Baloch*"[50]. In such a case, the Baloch insurgency could affect the Indo-Pakistan peace process. According to the Inspector General of Pakistan's Frontier Corps, Obedullah, thirty *farari* (fugitive) camps are located across the border in Afghanistan, funded by foreign powers.[51] According to reports, former President Pervez Musharraf also raised the point with American officials in September 2007 and asked for US intervention on the 'deliberate' attempt of New Delhi and Kabul to destabilise Balochistan.[52] Within the Pakistani security establishment, it is assumed that the nature of Indian involvement in Balochistan could be a tit-for-tat strategy of the Indians against Pakistan's support of Islamist militants in Indian Kashmir.

Furthermore, the fanning of insurgency in Balochistan could spill over into Iran, which views the growing unrest in Pakistani Balochistan as a potential source of instability with respect to its own Baloch population[53].

The modernisation theory of development argues that economic growth leads to the transformation of small, socially cohesive, traditional communities and that the resistance to change thins away as economic interests generate new social dynamics. The story of Balochistan is a little different, in that its geographical spread, degree of backwardness and marginalisation, low population density, complex political landscape and consistent neglect pose key challenges to the advent of modernity. The ongoing struggles against externally-induced development in the province, therefore, are neither new nor exceptional. The federal government's efforts to establish new military cantonments in the province in order to protect key installations have been deeply unpopular in Balochistan.

However, an ungoverned and increasingly ungovernable area poses a major challenge for the Pakistani state as well as the regional powers. In some ways, it would like to continue its policy of repressing the local insurgency; yet at the same time it needs to engage with the Baloch population, which is not possible without representative institutions, and administrative structures that can deliver basic entitlements and services.

The issue of targeted attacks on minorities has worsened in the past seven years. Hundreds of innocent people from the Hazara community have been killed by target killings. Around 700,000 Hazaras living in Quetta are bound to their homes and are unable to get out due to weak security. Hazaras are also increasingly looking to flee Balochistan.

Overall, the situation in Balochistan is far more complex than it seems at first sight.

The Pakistani state is continuing its policy of governing by *diktat* and through the military-led Frontier Corps (FC). The FC is federally controlled and is widely unpopular among the local population, who associate them with human rights violations and heavy-handed operations. The

**50.** Express Tribune, December 30, 2010.
**51.** Express Tribune, June 13, 2012.
**52.** Express Tribune, December 3, 2010
**53.** Kupecz Mickey, PAKISTAN'S BALOCH INSURGENCY: History, Conflict Drivers, and Regional Implications. Available at: http://iar-gwu.org/node/416

insurgency has paralysed whatever few governance structures were there in the province.

Regional powers such as Iran and India are also closely observing the situation - if not involved in it. The most recent addition to the external list is the United States, which has expressed concerns over the situation, and there are unconfirmed reports of its increasing involvement there. Many Baloch and Pashtun leaders in Quetta suspect an American hand behind the radical Sunni group *Jundullah* and *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* in the Shi'a killings. They believe that, to deny Iran any link with Pakistan and India, the US also publicly opposes the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline (as evidenced by statements of US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton and Ambassador to Pakistan, Cameron Munter). This reasoning is supported by the argument that an unstable, militarised Balochistan works against the Iran-Pakistan pipeline plan.

Overall, the presence of external and internal actors has rendered the province a virtual cesspool of violence, and ungovernability, and has entailed the rise of non-state actors and militias operating with impunity, widespread human rights abuses, great citizen discontent and the denial of basic rights such as education.[54]

## 3. South Punjab

The upsurge in extremism across Pakistan in the last decade is a worrying phenomenon, which has been validated in various reports and studies. Increasing intolerance, as documented by religiously motivated violence and sectarian unrest, are grim reminders of the impending dangers to Pakistani society. The extremist threat is not just restricted to the northwest of the country, but has seeped in deeper to regions of Punjab and urban Sindh. The case of increasing radicalisation in South Punjab, in a province which is the economic heartland of Pakistan, is of paramount importance.

The absence of effective state institutions, lack of physical infrastructure and corruption among the state agents are among the prime contributors to weak state control across South Punjab. Here too, governance gaps have allowed freedom of action to illicit actors. The lack of monopoly on means of coercion brought about by the presence of armed religious groups has made governance difficult and adversely affected the law and order situation in the region.

South Punjab comprises three administrative divisions of Pakistan's largest province: Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan and Multan. These three divisions collectively represent 22 districts of the area. According to population statistics of 2010, Punjab has 93 million inhabitants, of whom 32 percent live in the Southern Punjab. Given the size and high population density of the region, the increases in radicalisation present a real threat to the stability of the country.

Growing radicalisation is intricately linked to the pervasive poverty in the area. Estimates show that out of all 34 districts of Punjab, with the exception of Multan, the least-developed ones are in South Punjab.[55] The poverty incidence is high at 43 percent and the unemployment rate in urban and rural areas is also higher compared to northern districts of the

**54.** Human Rights Watch (2011). 'We can torture you, kill, or keep you for years' – Enforced Disappearances by Pakistan's security forces in Balochistan. Human Rights Watch. Available at: http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/pakistan-0711WebInside.pdf

**55.** Bengali, Kaiser (2012). "*The Case for a New Province*". *Dawn (*25 May 2012). Available at: http://dawn.com/2012/05/25/the-case-for-a-new-province/>.

RAZA AHMAD RUMI

province.[56]  Over 55 percent of labour in South Punjab is employed in the primary sector.  The lack of employment opportunities makes militant factions appear lucrative options to the  unemployed youth, contributing to a rising trend towards radicalisation and extremism.  Similarly, other socio-economic indicators such as education, health and housing are low, indicating weak governance and acute underdevelopment.  The state has been unable to devise and enforce a system of accountability, thus creating room for militant outfits and giving them free space to expand.[57]

The fanning of extremist passions was initiated during the Soviet war in Afghanistan during the 1980s, when a cadre of *mujahideen* were required to fight as proxies against the Soviet Union.  Following the Soviet withdrawal, *jihadis* continued to enter Punjab, training over 25,000 extremists in terror camps.  Research shows a strong presence of Punjabi Taliban in the southern regions of the province.  The armed militants used existing networks of puritan Islamic sects such as *Deobandi* and *Ahl-e-Hadith* and their seminaries (*madrassas*) to recruit youth disenchanted by poverty into their militant outfits.  The state has been reluctant to address this  because many of these militant outfits, in particular the *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP), *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (LeJ), *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (JeM) and *Lashkar-e-Tayyaba* (LeT), have been drawing support from the country's establishment and intelligence agencies.

Analysts such as Khaled Ahmed hold that the above-mentioned groups, working purely towards sectarian warfare, were initially created during the reign of general Zia ul Haq to fight a proxy war for Saudi Arabia against Shi'a Iran.  These groups were also useful to Pakistan's intelligence agencies as strategic assets in the conflict with India over the disputed territory of Kashmir.  As per estimates, about 5,000-9,000 youths  from southern Punjab are said to be fighting in Afghanistan and Waziristan.[58]  This number is modest when compared to the seminaries operating in the the Punjab.  In 2008, an estimated 1400 seminaries and 36,000 enrolled students were operating in Bahawalpur division alone.  Many of these seminaries are used by militant organisations to attract groups of young men, by offering them privileges such as food and accommodation.  The recruits are ideologically indoctrinated to be used as foot soldiers in implementing the international and local terror plans of militant organisations, including those  of al-Qaeda and its operatives.  Intelligence reports have estimated that about 5,000 recruits from southern and northern Punjab entered South Waziristan in 2005, and about 1,000 newly trained ones returned to the province.

In order to devise mechanisms to combat growing radicalisation in South Punjab, the state needs to rethink its fatal policy of allowing these groups to operate with impunity.  In the recent years, Pakistan has seen a continued increase in sectarian operations especially directed against Shi'a Muslims.  The total death toll due to sectarian conflict since 1989 is estimated to be more than 7,800.[59]

Since September 2010, an average of three or four incidents of sectarian violence have taken place every month in Pakistan.  Most sectarian attacks took place in Balochistan, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the tribal areas.  Sectarian violence in the northern areas (Gilgit Baltistan) region can be attributed to the pervasion of extremist *Salafi* ideology in the region, implemented by these armed groups.  All of this reflects continued government and state inability to erode their capacity.

**56.** Magazine, Inpaper (2012). "*Economic Viability of a Seraiki Province*". Dawn *(14 May 2012).* Available at: http://dawn.com/2012/05/14/economic-viability-of-a-seraiki-province/>.

**57.** Siddiqa, Ayesha (2009). "*Brothers in Arms*". Newsline Magazine, 9 Sept. 2009. Available at: http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2009/09/brothers-in-arms/

**58.** Siddiqa, Ayesha (2009). "*Terror's Training Ground*". Newsline Magazine, 9 Sept. 2009. Available at: http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2009/09/terror's-training-ground/>.

**59.** South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP). 2012. Sectarian Violence in Pakistan. Accessed on: April 23, 2012.Accessed from: http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/sect-killing.htm.

Over the last few years, a widespread acceptance of Al-Qaeda's anti-Western stance has permeated large swathes of the population. In this climate, the US policy of targeting Al-Qaeda and its affiliates through drone strikes has forced its leaders to spread out and find new operational bases within urban Pakistan. Karachi, for instance, has been cited as a major ground for the continuation of its operations, in addition to Faisalabad, Lahore and other areas. Furthermore, Al-Qaeda may have entered into an alliance with home-grown militants such as the TTP and old sectarian groups.

A Pakistani researcher, Amir Rana,[60] has written on how the TTP and its affiliate groups have claimed responsibility for sectarian attacks. "*This trend reveals the close nexus between the Taliban and several major sectarian and militant groups in Punjab, which are now labelled as 'Punjabi Taliban'. This alliance between the Taliban and sectarian outfits is now expanding its targets.*"[61] While Al-Qaeda may be retreating from FATA, its local allies especially from Southern Punjab are a major cause of instability and have grave implications for the region. While on one hand the groups are focused on Afghanistan and Iran, they also have designs for India. Several analysts both in Pakistan and abroad have noted that another attack such as the one that took place in Mumbai during 2008 could potentially trigger a wider conflict between the two states.

The Pakistani state policy of allowing space for militant organisations needs serious review. The militarisation of Pakistani society and the havoc wreaked by rogue 'strategic assets' on the country should be evidence enough that the state cannot continue to support militant organisations at the cost of fragmenting Pakistani society and causing regional instability. In South Punjab, state-building must be ensured by strengthening the capacity of central and sub-national administrative structures, enhancing the state's legitimacy, improving capability to enforce control and delivering the needed services.

## Conclusions & The Way Forward

Devolution of powers from the centre to the provinces under the 18th Amendment of the Constitution and the Frontier Crimes Regulation Act reforms are some of the noteworthy developments that a weak civilian government has initiated in the recent years. Overall, the direction is positive and reflects the inherent capacity of Pakistan's political parties to deliver. However, regional instability and war in the neighbourhood and in FATA make the realisation of reform challenging.

Decades of political instability, the growth of violent Islamism and sectarianism, a poor record of citizen rights, lack of welfare and inequitable distribution of economic opportunities makes Pakistan a 'paradigmatic' fragile state.

However, its crisis is not solely about the withering of the central state. It has to do with the inability of the postcolonial state to define, negotiate and respect citizenship. There is an urgent need for democratisation and for shifting the focus onto 'human security' and away from the archaic notions of 'national security', which are

**60.** Amir Rana is an editor of the quarterly journal 'Conflict and Peace Studies' and regularly writes for DAWN, Pakistan's leading English newspaper.
**61.** Rana, Amir (2010). "*Lahore under siege – Punjab: A new battlefield*". The Friday Times (9 July 2011).

RAZA AHMAD RUMI

anchored in militarisation of both society and state. Given the current trajectory, Pakistan's ungovernability is going to rise further, thereby fuelling the prospects of continued regional instability as well as the uncertain future of a nuclear state.

The problem of growing intolerance emanating from mosques and *madrassas* also presents significant challenges to policymakers.

The fact that the activities of mosques and seminaries do not fall under the direct jurisdiction of government gives 'free hand' to religious and sectarian elements to use them for promoting hatred and inciting violence against opposing groups. According to the International Crisis Group, preaching in mosques and madrassas remains the principle source of recruitment for militant organisations.[62] The practice of using mosque sermons to promote parochial religious aims and to disseminate hatred against minorities continues unabated. Mosques have also been found to award extra-judicial punishments that disturb law and order and promote unrest in society. There is therefore a crucial need to regulate sermons and check hate-preaching in mosques, and the government must take essential steps in this regard.

## Policy Implications

In part, ungovernability arises from the extent and nature of state building that is undertaken in a particular region. State building[63] is intimately connected to political processes through which state-society relations between holders of state power and organised groups in society are managed and negotiated. The process seeks to build resilience and improve the capabilities of the state to deliver functions that match the expectations of societal groups. Improving society's capability to demand, impose and obtain accountability is a critical part of the state-building process and civil society plays a central role in enforcing such mechanisms across society.[64]

A distinct set of recommendations is proposed for each of the three regions.

### 1. FATA

In FATA, the Frontier Crimes Regulation Act should be repealed to bring the region administratively and constitutionally at par with the settled areas of the country. The present state of the FCR is in violation of fundamental human rights and amendments should be made to ensure protection of the rights of tribal people. The FCR stands as an impediment to social change in the region and its patriarchal norms discriminate against women and children. Political reforms in FATA are a pre-condition to socio-economic development. Local government plans must be immediately implemented. Government policy should be based on fiscal decentralisation to empower local institutions and enhance service delivery to the people.

The separation of the judiciary and the executive should also be ensured in FATA, as the current constitutional injunction does not

**62.** International Crisis Group (2002). Pakistan: Madrassas, Extremism and the Military. International Crisis Group.
**63.** OECD (2008). State Building in Situations of Fragility. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
**64.** Cahen, M. (2005). Making States Work: State Failure and Crisis of Governance. UN University Press

differentiate between the two. In order to discourage tribal customs that violate human rights, the government must also implement Article 8 of the Constitution, which describes fundamental rights available to all Pakistani citizens. Efforts must also be made to re-establish the writ of the state and tackle militant activity in the region. For this, the government must take steps to disarm militants, shut down terrorist training camps and disconnect the flow of money and weapons to the insurgent groups. It must also devise a credible system of justice to prosecute those responsible for killing civilians and government officials. The militants must be prevented from establishing parallel systems of administration and justice, and the government must seek to gradually replace the existing ones with, or bring them under the jurisdiction of, state controlled institutions.

## 2. Balochistan

In Balochistan, the Government of Pakistan must end its reliance on military solutions to the crisis. Instead, it should focus on addressing the socio-economic and political grievances of the Baloch people. The government must call the armed forces back to barracks and restrict their role to the safeguarding of land and borders. The Frontier Corps should be withdrawn and replaced with provincial security forces that are managed and controlled by the provincial administration.

The political freedoms of the Baloch people must be respected and all detainees held by the establishment must be produced before courts. The government should release all political prisoners and seek an all-out end to the political role of military and intelligence agencies. Concrete steps must also be taken to end intimidation, torture, arbitrary arrests, disappearances and extra-judicial killings. The travel restrictions applied on Baloch opposition leaders and members of opposition groups must be withdrawn. Human rights groups and local and international media should be allowed unhindered access across all regions of the province. The Baloch should be entrusted with their own security and the central government must accept provincial jurisdiction over law and order and policing matters.

Most importantly, the government should address Baloch concerns about royalties obtained from natural resources, control of development projects and of social sector expenditure. Central government allocations must be made taking into account backwardness, lack of development and geographic size.

## 3. South Punjab

Regarding South Punjab, the government must take steps to contain religious militancy that has reached critical levels. It should take measures to check the proliferation of weapons and growth of private militias by *madrassas* and extremist groups. The propagation of hate speech from mosque loudspeakers must be stopped and steps should be taken to contain the distribution of extremist literature. Overall, the government should enhance oversight over the *madrassa* sector, including its finances and enrolments, and conduct regular inquiries.

RAZA AHMAD RUMI

Steps should be taken to identify seminaries having links with *jihadi* groups, and those suspected should be put under close surveillance.

## 4. The International Community

The international community must engage in a purposeful dialogue with the Pakistani government on broad institutional reform to FATA's governance. At the same time, it must install effective oversight on aid that is flowing towards Pakistan - especially for FATA and Balochistan. It must also rethink the delivery of military aid and refocus its effort on aid to civil society groups, political parties and mainstream governance institutions linking progress on reform and counter-extremism to aid flows.

## 5. The Regional Dimension

Finally, there is a greater need for regional cooperation and dialogue. To date, Pakistan has been viewed by the world in terms of its relationship with India and the United States. The regional actors such as Iran and China as well as the Central Asian States are legitimate stakeholders in regional peace and stability. Mechanisms for regional cooperation are fragmented, ineffective and require effective facilitation and interlocutors. More importantly, there is limited people-to-people contact and a dearth of Track II (alternative, unofficial) talks between regional actors, which needs to be supported by the international community to counter the rise of extremism in Pakistan and to tackle its growing ungovernability. Whilst Pakistan may be "too big to fail" as has been repeated time and again, neither can it survive as a functional polity with communities living in fear, denied basic rights and entitlements and a state complacent with its weakening writ.

The prospects of peace in Pakistan dissect closely with the stability and international reconstruction process in neighbouring Afghanistan. The area relevant to the success of Afghan mission extends not just up to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, but beyond it, to FATA and Balochistan.[65] The US is already injecting military and civilian aid for the rehabilitation of the people of FATA, as part of the greater Afghan reconstruction effort. Besides this, Pakistan's interests in eliminating the Taliban leadership in Peshawar and Quetta, as well as the militant safe heavens in FATA, align closely with international war efforts in Afghanistan. The need to have a regional strategy to tackle insurgency and bring law and order is thus urgent.

Trade holds vital prospects for returning long-term stability and bringing forth socio-economic development to the region. The long-severed trade links between New Delhi and Islamabad have left the region void of significant economic gains. The recent agreements between the two countries to open trade routes and Pakistan's granting of MFN status to India are a "*profound and welcome shift*"[66] towards greater stability and economic integration in the region. Through trade, Pakistan holds prospects of becoming an 'economic hub' in the region, thereby enabling it to benefit from China's trade surplus and ample savings; from mineral-rich Central Asia and Iran; and from rising India.

**65.** French, J. L. (2009). Enhancing Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations: A report of the global dialogue between European Union and the United States. Center for Strategic and International Studies. Available at: http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090122_lindley_enhancingstabil_web.pdf

**66.** The Economist (2012). "*India and Pakistan: Clever steps at the border*". The Economist (12 May 2012). Available at: http://www.economist.com/node/21554526

# Afterword

The Pakistani state has attempted to address the governance challenge by undertaking a set of measures over the last three years. In Balochistan, the state crackdown on the nationalist movement has continued, resulting in weakening the insurgency, but also in creating space for back channel parleys with the separatist leaders. None the less, there are reports of human rights abuses and a political settlement has still to be carved out with the separatist groups.

In the North Waziristan agency of FATA, a major military operation has been underway since 2014, clearing much of the area that was under the control of the Pakistani Taliban. Nearly one million people have been displaced. There are chances however that future peacebuilding efforts will follow. A high level committee for reforms in FATA was constituted in 2015, with indications that the Pakistan military is supporting legal administrative reform that would improve citizen rights in the region. The future shape of these efforts, however, remains unclear.

Perhaps the most discernable improvement in restoring the writ of the state has taken place in Karachi. Another operation by the paramilitary force, the Rangers, in the city has seen a considerable decrease in violence during 2015, improving both security and the investment climate. But long-term reforms are yet to be initiated, casting doubts over the future trajectory. A National Action Plan against terrorism is under implementation (since December 2014), with a civil-military consensus to capture nonstate actors and enforce the state writ across the country. However, despite the effective coercive crackdown on the Pakistani Taliban and their sectarian allies, key reforms in the legal system, and regulation of seminaries have yet to be initiated to consolidate gains achieved. The anticipated $46 bn Chinese investment to build an economic corridor has created a dynamic that is likely to propel the state - especially the military - to reduce violent extremism and resolve issues of political governance in Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan (through which the corridor would pass) and ensure that FATA does not re-emerge as a haven for militant networks. But the continued uncertainty in Afghanistan is a key threat; and this is why China is directly involved in the peace process there.

**Raza Ahmad Rumi**
2016

## References

Abbas Hassan, President Obama's policy Options in FATA. Available at: http://www.ispu.org/files/PDFs/fata_report.pdf

Ahmed, M. (2009). "*Taliban Commander: We're fighting for 'independence*". NBC News. Available at: http://worldblog.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2009/11/18/4376958-taliban-commander-were-fighting-for-independence

Aziz, Khalid (2012). "*Drivers of extremism in FATA and KP*". Available at: http://pique.pk/pakistan-magazine-english-online/security/18-May-2012/drivers-of-extremism-in-fata-and-kp

Beall, J., Fox, S. & Gazdar, H. (2010). State Fragility and State-Building in Pakistan. Policy Directions, Crisis States Research Centre. London School of Economics

Burke, J. (2012). "*Al-Qaeda leadership almost wiped out in Pakistan, British officials believe*". The Guardian. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/25/al-qaida-leadership-pakistan-africa

Cahen, M. (2005). Making States Work: State Failure and Crisis of Governance. UN University Press

Clunan, A. L. & Trinkunas, H. A. (2010). Alternatives to State Authority in the Era of Softened Sovereignty: Ungoverned Spaces.

Fisherman, B. (2010). Muddying the 'Taliban.' Foreign Policy. Available at: http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/11/muddying_the_taliban

Fisherman, B. (2010). The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict across the FATA and NWFP. New American Foundation, p. 3. Available at: http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/fishman.pdf

Grare, F. (2006). "*Pakistan: The Resurgence of Baloch Nationalism*". Carnegie Papers: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

HRCP (2009). Pushed to the wall: Report of the HRCP fact-finding mission to Balochistan. Available at: http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/Pushed%20to%20the%20wall.pdf

HRCP (2005). FCR: A Bad Law Nobody Can Defend. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Available at: http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/FCR%20Report.pdf

International Crisis Group (2010). Pakistan: The Worsening IDP Crisis. Available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/b111%20pakistan%20-%20the%20worsening%20idp%20crisis.pdf

International Crisis Group (2006). Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan. Available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/119_pakistan_the_worsening_conflict_in_balochistan

International Crisis Group (2006). Pakistan's Trial Areas: Appeasing the Militants. Available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/125-pakistans-tribal-areas-appeasing-the-militants.aspx

Iqbal, K. (2008). Counter-agency in Balochistan: Pakistan's Strategy, Outcome and Future Implications. Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies

Kupecz, Mickey. Pakistan's Baloch Insurgency: History, Conflict Drivers, and Regional Implications. Available at: http://iar-gwu.org/node/416

OECD (2008). State Building in Situations of Fragility. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Rana, Amir (2010). "*Lahore under siege – Punjab: A new battlefield*". The Friday Times (9 July 2011).

RAND (2007). Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism (2007). RAND Corporation

Rehman, I. A. (2002). "*Dark Justice*". Newsline. Available at: http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2002/08/dark-justice/

Special Balochistan Report (March 2012). Media Point. Available at: http://www.mediapoint.pk/special-balochistan-report-march-2012/

Walsh, E. (2012). "*Should the US Support and Independent Balochistan?*" Al-Jazeera. Available at: http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/02/201222112203196390.html

Walsh, D. (2009). "*Strategic Balochistan becomes a target in war against terror*". The Guardian. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/dec/21/us-taliban-balochistan-strategy-pakistan

Yusufzai, R. (2001). "*Analysis: Pakistan's Tribal Frontiers*". BBC News. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1711316.stm

Yusufzai, A. (2011). "*Democracy Follows Drones in Pakistan*". Al-Jazeera. Available at:http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/08/201182573132986205.html

# THE CONSTRUCTION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF PAKISTAN: THE INSTITUTIONAL WRIT OF THE STATE

## Zahid Hussain

*Journalist and writer*

## 1. Introduction

It is indeed a huge stride forward for Pakistani democracy that, for the first time in its chequered political history, power was transferred from one elected government to another. While this uninterrupted political process is a turning point in Pakistani politics, there is still a long way to go for the struggling democracy to take root.

Governance remains a major problem area in Pakistan's quest for a sustainable democratic process. Worsening internal security, shrinking state authority and failing state institutions have undermined Pakistan's political stability. The failure of elected governments to deliver on governance and economic stability has been a serious blow to the credibility of the democratic system among the populace, in turn strengthening undemocratic forces. Rising militancy and religious extremism are manifest in the inability of the government to deal with the twin menace, which is currently the biggest threat to the country's security.

Non-state actors have gained space, filling the vacuum created by the failure of state institutions to deliver. There has been a marked increase in ungoverned space as administrative control – even in major towns – weakens. It is not only the semi-autonomous tribal regions where the state has nominal control: even parts of Karachi – the country's biggest city and economic jugular – have become lawless as the administrative authority has receded. The situation in the insurgency-hit western province of Balochistan is even worse. A large part of the province still does not have a formal administrative structure.

The failure of tax collection is another example of the weakening of state authority and it leaves the government with few resources to develop the economic infrastructure. It also makes the country even more dependent on foreign aid. Tax revenue as a percentage of GDP has stagnated at 10 percent over the last decade and has been declining since 2009.[1] The extent of tax evasion can also be assessed by the fact that just over one million entities (individuals and companies) filed their income tax returns in FY2011. In the same year, of 341 sitting members of the National

[1]  "What is pushing tax reform in Pakistan?" Safiya Aftab, NOREF 23 January 2014.

Assembly, only 90 were found to have filed tax returns. The Federal Board of Revenue has failed to institute legal proceedings in spite of this wealth of information.[2]

Pakistani politics has increasingly become region-based, with even the mainstream national political parties now focusing on their provincial strongholds following the 2013 parliamentary elections in which they formed governments in their respective provinces. At present, no party has a political base in all four provinces. This regionalization of politics is manifested in an era of coalition rule and different political parties forming the government at the centre and in the provinces.

A recent amendment to the country's Constitution has created greater decentralization of economic and political decision-making down to the provincial level[3]. The autonomy granted to the provinces has transformed Pakistan into a truly federal state and generated a new dynamic that has affected the course of politics in the country in a more positive way, minimising the sources of friction between the provinces and the federation as well as among the provinces.

This paper looks at the challenges that confront Pakistan, the political fault-lines, the problems of democratic transition, the regionalization of politics, the rising scourge of violent militancy, and shrinking state authority that have affected state institutions and the democratic process in the country.

## 2. The Fault Lines

Since its creation as an independent state carved out from the Indian Subcontinent in 1947, Pakistan has alternated between authoritarian military regimes and ineffective elected civilian rule. For most of its history, the country has been ruled by the powerful military with short spans of elected civilian democracy in between. No elected government had completed its full term in office until the previous administration led by the Pakistan's People's Party (PPP) achieved this milestone. This also explains why democratic institutions and values have not fully developed, rendering the political process weak.

There has been no fundamental change in Pakistan's political power structure. A small power elite has dominated the country's political scene under civilian as well as military rule. The extractive nature of the state's institutions has prevented the country from embarking on a path of economic and political progress. Despite the economic and social changes that have occurred over the past 65 years, the stranglehold of family-oriented politics has been perpetuated. Hailing mostly from rural landowning and tribal backgrounds, a limited number of influential families continue to control Pakistani legislatures.

A sense of dynastic entitlement dominates the country's political culture, impeding the development of institutional democracy. With few exceptions, almost all the political parties are an extension of powerful families with hereditary leadership. There is no concept of inner party democracy. Over the years, families from urban, religious, and military backgrounds have also emerged onto the political scene, but this has not changed Pakistan's personalized and dynastical political culture. Most of these dynastic political

**2.** Ibid
**3.** The 18th Amendment to the Constitution was unanimously passed by Parliament in April 2010. It removed changes made by previous military governments, restoring the Constitution to its original form of 1973. It also provided greater autonomy to the federating units.

groups have actively collaborated with successive military regimes to protect their vested interests and receive state patronage.

It is this culture of patronage and clientelism that drives Pakistani politics and persists under both civilian and military rule – the only change has been the shift in control over the distribution of patronage. The patronage-based politics practiced by democratic and military governments alike relies on influential landlords, tribal leaders, clans and kinship.[4] Hence, electoral politics largely revolves around gaining control of state patronage. It is also about managing and strengthening family and clannish interests. In many cases, members of the same family are distributed among different political parties to protect group interests.[5] The control of a narrow oligarchic elite and the patriarchal political system has impeded the critical structural reforms that are needed for sustainable economic development and for strengthening democratic and economic institutions. Resource control, particularly landholding, remains a significant predictor of political influence. The two land reforms carried out in the 1960s and 1970s were largely ineffective in breaking large landholdings; some parts of the country continued to live under oppressive feudal and tribal systems. Therefore, dynastic control still constrains wider political participation and has kept political parties from developing new leadership.

## 3. The Democratic Transition 2008–2014

Pakistan returned to civilian democracy in early 2008, ending more than eight years of military-led rule. The transition to complete civilian rule has not been easy, especially as the elections produced a divided mandate with no political party obtaining an absolute majority in the National Assembly. The elections were, however, a triumph for liberal and moderate political forces as they essentially represented a vote against military rule and for the restoration of democracy. The 2008 general elections brought the PPP back to power after a hiatus of more than 11 years. Having been in opposition for that long with its leader in exile, the PPP came to power without a clear program in place: the party had remained preoccupied with struggling against military rule for the past decade.

Despite having been in politics for four decades and in power three times, the party had failed to develop a strong organizational structure. The assassination of Benazir Bhutto, in 2007 deprived the party of its most charismatic and experienced leader. The former prime minister became the highest-profile victim of the terrorism engulfing the country. The mantle of the party's leadership fell on her widower, Asif Ali Zardari, who had spent more than 11 years in jail facing trial on a litany of corruption charges. In a country where dynastic politics is so deeply entrenched, Mr Zardari did not find it difficult to claim the leadership of the party as its rightful inheritor. It was, perhaps, the only way to maintain the PPP's unity in a very difficult time. He was elected the country's president, succeeding General Musharraf.

Mr Zardari proved to be a skilled politician, building a strong coalition of disparate political groups. He is also rightly credited for strengthening the democratic process and making changes to the Constitution by granting greater autonomy to the provinces. Although his own constitutional

4. Beyond the Crisis State, Maleeha Lodhi. Oxford University Press. 2011
5. Ibid

ZAHID HUSSAIN

powers were clipped under the 18th Amendment, he remained the most powerful political leader in the country. Drawing his power as chairman of the ruling party, Mr Zardari virtually ran the government from the confines of the President House.

Despite tension with the powerful military and superior judiciary, the PPP managed to remain in power for its full five-year term – a rare feat for an elected government in Pakistan. Mr Zardari also had the distinction of presiding over an unprecedented transition to another elected government: a remarkable accomplishment indeed for one often described as an "accidental" leader.

These are not, however, the only reasons for which Mr Zardari will be long remembered. Ironically, these were also years of waste for the country's economy and governance, pushing the country towards a financial meltdown. His arbitrary and personal style of governance caused further weakening of state institutions. Being Zardari had its own perils. Despite rising to power, he was unable to escape his past reputation and old corruption cases continued to haunt him. His standoff with the Supreme Court on the issue of reopening the Swiss money-laundering case claimed the scalp of one prime minister and kept the sword of Damocles hanging over Mr Zardari's head.[6]

While his relations with the military may not have been smooth, Mr Zardari learnt to coexist with the generals, sometimes conceding ground or making compromises. His political dexterity was not, however, the only reason for his long stay in power. He benefited hugely from the military's decision to take a backseat and from the new domestic political dynamics that had no appetite for any kind of extra-constitutional intervention. In turn, Zardari's non-confrontationist ways also suited the generals.

His government was, however, constrained by the standoff with the judiciary. The period saw unprecedented judicial activism as the Supreme Court emerged as the most powerful organ of the state following the restoration of Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry[7] as Chief Justice in 2009. Along with other senior judges, he was sacked by General Musharraf in November 2007 under emergency rule. A large number of constitutional petitions and suo motto actions involving the misuse of public funds, loss to the national exchequer, extra-judicial killings, missing persons, illegal appointments, illegal promotions, written-off bank loans, and matters pertaining to the conservation of the environment were taken up.

This was the first time in Pakistan's history that a sitting prime minister was deposed by the Supreme Court.[8] Cabinet ministers and senior government officials faced trial on corruption charges. Although this judicial activism may have helped destabilize the government, the judiciary's assertiveness had more to do with the failure of the administration to enforce rule of law and the lack of governance. The judiciary filled the vacuum left by the inaction of the PPP government.

Poor governance and widespread allegations of corruption led to the party being routed out in the 2013 elections. Once the country's most powerful political force, it was reduced to a regional party confined to its stronghold in the southern province of Sindh. It was the PPP's worst

6. Mr Zardari faced a number of legal proceedings (including the charge of laundering money through Swiss banks) that were initiated in 1997. While never convicted, he spent eight years in prison on these charges. The case was withdrawn in 2008 but the Supreme Court ordered it to be reopened.

7. General Musharraf sacked Chief Justice on 9 March 2007 but the Supreme Court restored him in September. Musharraf sacked Justice Chaudhry again after he imposed a state of emergency on 3 November 2007. The chief justice was restored to his post in 2009.

8. Prime minister Yousaf Raza Gilani was removed from the post by the Supreme Court in 2012 and disqualified from holding any public office for five years for contempt of court.

election defeat since its inception some 40 years ago. The party was completely wiped out from Pakistan's biggest province, Punjab.

The 2013 elections saw the triumphant return to power of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) faction led by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. This was a remarkable turn of fortune for a political leader who, some 13 years ago, was ousted from power in a military coup and convicted on treason charges before being sent into exile. Elected as the country's prime minister for a record third time, Mr Sharif, a 63-year-old business tycoon, is back at the helm. Following the elections, Pakistan had also undergone two other transitions with the retirement of the army chief and the chief justice of the Supreme Court.

Mr Sharif's previous stints in power – shortened by his removal each time half way through the term – were not quite so enviable. It is certainly not going to be smooth sailing for him this time either, with the country facing a security and economic meltdown. Pakistan's political landscape has changed extensively since Mr Sharif's previous term in office. The country is now engaged in a war with the same militant groups once patronized by the state. Thousands of civilians and military personnel have been killed in the war against terror, and there are no easy solutions to these complex problems.

With the support of its allies, Mr Sharif's PML-N now has a comfortable majority in the National Assembly, which will allow the government to make the tough decisions urgently needed to stabilize the economic downslide and prevent a complete security collapse. The change in army leadership and the new chief justice of the Supreme Court also present a favourable situation for Mr Sharif's third stint in power. Despite this, there seems to be little sign yet of the new government moving decisively on key security and economic reforms. While its landslide victory in Punjab catapulted the PML-N back to power in Islamabad, the party has failed to gain a strong foothold in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). This makes the new government more Punjab-centric with some serious ramifications for the federation, alienating the smaller provinces.

Despite its emphatic victory in the elections, the PML-N has not been able to introduce any new blood and the same old faces continue to dominate the Cabinet. The party is still trapped in the past and seems unwilling to move forward in a changed situation. The challenges facing the country need a leadership with a fresh outlook and vision. The Cabinet, however, is packed with Mr Sharif's close family members and a small coterie of supporters from central Punjab. He has continued with a highly personalized style of governance. The other provinces are only nominally represented in the government, widening the gap between Punjab and the rest of the country.

While the military has seemingly taken a back seat, it has not lost its clout and remains a determinant of Pakistan's security and, to some extent, its foreign policy. The civil and military relationship under the Sharif government remains tense – this is partly a case of past baggage that refuses to go away, keeping alive each other's distrust. Mr Sharif has not forgotten that his previous government was ousted by the military although other key policy differences have also soured his relations with the generals.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

One of his first steps was to put on trial the former military ruler, General Musharraf – the man who had ousted Mr Sharif's government in a military coup and sent him into exile. The military perceives the trial of their former chief as an attack on the institution of the army. Moreover, the military leadership is not happy with the government's attempts to engage in prolonged peace negotiations with the Taliban who are fighting their troops in the tribal areas.

Indeed, civil and military relations are not easy to manage in Pakistan, given its chequered political history. But democracy cannot work without the two being on the same page on critical national issues, for which the responsibility lies with both institutions. Only better governance and greater ability in terms of policy direction on the part of the elected government – rather than a confrontationist approach – will help establish civilian supremacy.

The retirement of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry saw a transition in the leadership of the top judicial body in December 2013. The new Chief Justice has tried to restore balance to the Supreme Court's actions, particularly to those that infringed on the powers of the executive. An independent judiciary is vital for strengthening the rule of law and institutional democracy, but the constant tug of war between the two state institutions has impeded the smooth functioning of democracy.

## 4. The Regionalisation of Politics

The 2013 elections have reinforced the regionalization of politics in Pakistan with each provincial government controlled by a different political party. While Punjab remains under the PML-N, Sindh is retained by the PPP. The country's most troubled province, KP, has a brand new face in the form of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leading the administration. In equally troubled Balochistan, the National Party – a Baloch nationalist group – and the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, which achieved a stunning victory in the Pakhtun belt, have formed the provincial government. The very low turnout in some of the insurgency-affected Baloch constituencies aside, the return of the Baloch nationalist parties to the democratic process made the elections more credible, given that these groups had boycotted the previous elections.

These fragmented power centres at the provincial and federal levels have made all the major political parties stakeholders of the system. The situation has also, however, created problems in obtaining a consensus on certain key economic structural reforms – such as privatization – that need approval from all the provinces.

These were the first elections to be held after the passage of the 18th Amendment, which has granted greater autonomy to the provinces. With most of the power already transferred to the provinces, the role of the central government has become limited. While this is mostly positive, it has created some difficulties for the federal government in formulating a coherent internal security policy and introducing economic structural reforms that require the consent of the provinces. The amendment has decentralised economic and political decision-making down to the provincial level. This provincial autonomy has transformed Pakistan into

a truly federal state and generated a new dynamic affecting the course of politics. The country's political parties are now more focused on their respective strongholds.

The 7th National Financial Commission Award, which followed the 18th Amendment, has also resulted in the transfer of more resources to the provinces. This has left the federal government to focus primarily on the macroeconomic framework and the conduct of fiscal, monetary, and trade policies. A critical question is how the Punjab-dominated government will coexist with the new decentralised federal structure.

The growing trend of region-based politics has some inherent problems. It has resulted in political parties giving priority to their own narrow regional interests. This is true not only for the sub-nationalist groups but also for the mainstream national political parties. While greater autonomy for the provinces may have strengthened the federal democratic system, it has also sharpened the political, economic, and ethno-linguistic differences within. The process of decentralization is likely to reinforce the regionalization of politics and give impetus to the demand for further division of provinces on ethnic, linguistic, and administrative lines. The clamour for the creation of new provinces and further devolution of power to the district and town level is likely to become a major issue in the coming years.

Over the years, the smaller regional parties appear to have become stronger, making coalition politics more deeply entrenched in Pakistan. The main political parties now depend on regional groups to form a stable government. Opinion is, however, divided on whether coalition politics will lead to a more inclusive democracy or result in more fragmented politics, making it difficult to reach any agreement on key national issues.

While coalition politics over the last six years has helped strengthen federalism and the democratic polity – giving the regional political parties a greater say in policymaking – it has some inherent problems that could obstruct long-term economic structural reforms. For example, differences among the coalition partners stalled critical tax and power sector reforms during the previous PPP-led government. Despite its problems, coalition politics also helps bring the government closer to the people. This trend has come to stay due to the strengthening of region-based politics and democracy in Pakistan.

## 5. The Economy in Crisis

An economy in crisis and a highly fragmented political landscape has increased Pakistan's vulnerability. For the first time in its history, the economic growth rate has remained around 3 percent for five consecutive years – far lower than in the other South Asian countries. High population growth and rising inflation are pushing more and more Pakistanis below the poverty line. The absence of a tax culture, the inability of the state to mobilize domestic resources, and bad fiscal management have all contributed to Pakistan's perpetual financial crisis and increased its dependence on external financial assistance. A large sector of the economy is exempted from income tax, resulting in one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios, which now stands at less than 10 percent.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

The total number of registered income tax payers is only 2.5 million out of a population of over 180 million people – this is slightly more than 1 percent of the population. The existing tax system is highly regressive and relies hugely on indirect taxation. This stems from the practices of an oligarchic system protecting its interests. There have also been no sustained efforts to document the vast informal sector, which is estimated to be twice the size of the formal economy.

Pakistan's tax collection rate is far lower than that of its neighbours and similar economies. The only countries to have performed worse are: Mexico (9.7), Haiti (9.4), Bangladesh (8.5), Cambodia (8.0), Algeria (7.7), the Central African Republic (7.7), Iran (7.3), Yemen (7.1), Afghanistan (6.4), Sudan (6.3), Nigeria (6.1), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5.9), Angola 5.7, Saudi Arabia (5.3), Burma (4.9), Chad (4.2), Bahrain (2.4), Libya (2.7), Qatar (2.2), Oman (2.0), Equatorial Guinea (1.7), Kuwait (1.5), and the UAE (1.4).[9]

Pakistan's geostrategic importance and its alignment with the West have historically helped the flow of substantial external aid to the country. While the availability of foreign resources helped Pakistan achieve an impressive growth rate of 6–7 percent in the 1980s and from 2001 to 2007, it also resulted in the postponement of vital tax and other structural reforms, which were critical for strengthening institutional capacity and accountability. Described by analysts as "borrowed economic growth", the trend has not been sustainable. Ever-increasing government expenditure and low revenue generation have reinforced the culture of living beyond one's means, piling up domestic and external debt. [10]

Notwithstanding the privatization of the banking and telecommunication sectors, state-owned enterprises remain huge and inefficient, accruing massive losses and adding to the government's financial burden. Successive governments have made no serious effort to disinvest these enterprises or even improve their operation. A major reason for maintaining state control is to be able to use such enterprises for the distribution of patronage.

The level of corruption and poor governance are major factors responsible for slowing down Pakistan's economic growth. Corruption is endemic in all state institutions and in the top government echelons, affecting policy implementation. A weak and corrupt judicial system is one of the major reasons for the lack of accountability. Political influence prevents any impartial investigation of corruption cases, while the corruption and accountability mechanisms that do exist are used for political manipulation and victimization of the opposition rather than as a means for corruption control. Lack of fiscal discipline and falling tax revenues have exacerbated Pakistan's economic woes and for the first time in its history, inflation has remained in double digits for five continuous years.

Since 2008, Pakistan has confronted a major power and energy shortage that has further affected the economy. The power crisis is more of a management problem than merely the lack of generation capacity. A major issue is the gap between the cost of generation and recovery of charges. The biggest defaulters are the federal and provincial governments and other state institutions.[11] This has created an ongoing

9.  http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ GC.TAX.TOTL.GD.ZS
10. Beyond the Crisis State, Maleeha Lodhi. Oxford University Press. 2011
11. http://www.dawn.com/ news/1103707

THE CONSTRUCTION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF PAKISTAN: THE INSTITUTIONAL WRIT OF THE STATE

problem of circular debt. The issue cannot be resolved without initiating institutional and structural reforms to deal with the serious energy and power crisis.

## 6. Militant Violence and Religious Extremism

Adding to Pakistan's economic woes are the problems of rising militancy and sectarian violence, which pose an existential threat to the nuclear-armed nation. Escalating militant violence has cost the country dearly both in terms of human life and economically. Rising Islamic radicalism threatens to tear apart the social fabric, with massive implications for the country's stability. It has earned the dubious distinction of being the largest incubator of jihadi extremism. The vacuum created by a weak state has, increasingly, been filled by Islamic extremists.

Rising religious extremism has further polarized Pakistani society and presents the biggest security challenge to the country. The failure of the state to enforce rule of law and formulate a comprehensive strategy to combat militancy has given space to religious extremists – and more than their public support implies. The threat of religious extremism is not likely to be extinguished soon, given the poor economic prospects of a large and unskilled youth population. Pakistan thus faces daunting challenges as it stands at a critical juncture of its history.

At present, the militants seem to be winning the battle of narratives as the Sharif government has put on hold its campaign against terrorism. A major reason for this inaction or policy of appeasement is the government's fear that it may lose the support of the strong religious lobby within the ruling PML-N. Many of its candidates in Punjab had formed alliances with extremist groups during the elections. The stalemate seems to have allowed the fragmented militant groups to regain their lost space.

Not only has the Pakistani state failed to protect the lives of its citizens, it has also conceded to the extremist ideology on many policy issues. The disturbing reality is that radical Islamic elements have as much – if not more – power over Pakistani society than the state. While the state has failed to develop a national narrative against militancy, an obscurantist ideology holds sway, filling the vacuum.

2013 saw an escalation in militant violence as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) sought to push the liberal political parties out of the electoral process. Hundreds of people were killed – including candidates and senior members of the Awami National Party – in targeted attacks in KP and other parts of the country during the election campaign. Only those political parties advocating a conciliatory policy towards militancy were spared and, as a result, they made a clean sweep.

How the country's political ruling elite has surrendered to the militants is well illustrated by the declaration that emanated from the All-Parties Conference held in August 2013. The joint statement attributed the loss of thousands of innocent lives not to militant violence but to the "war, the illegal and immoral drone strikes and the blowback from the actions of NATO forces in Afghanistan."[12] The conference virtually legitimized

**12.** APC backs government push for peace talks - Pakistan - DAWN.COM www.dawn.com/news/1041678

ZAHID HUSSAIN

terrorist action by declaring that the militant groups responsible for the deaths of thousands of men, women, children, and soldiers were stakeholders in the peace effort. Instead of coming up with a coherent strategy to counter terrorism, the political leadership has pursued a policy of pacification and started unconditional peace negotiations with the TTP. Resultantly, the extremists and their allies now dominate the public narrative despite their crimes against the people of Pakistan. This is an extremely dangerous situation for a country that faces the existential threat of spiralling violent extremism.

Although the peace talks with the militants were a non-starter, the government has still stuck to the mantra that talks are the only option. This dithering has already given a new lifeline to the TTP, which had begun to retreat from most of the tribal agencies and Malakand – areas they once controlled. Over the last few years, the TTP has lost many of its senior commanders and the network has fragmented into various factions. But the militants have now found a new stridency, taking advantage of the weakness of the state. With no will to fight, the government has already conceded too much ground to the Taliban with extremely dangerous consequences for national security. It may not be easy to salvage the situation.

Meanwhile, rising sectarian militancy is also a cause for serious concern. It presents a grave threat to the unity and stability of the country. Religious leaders, doctors, and other prominent public figures in particular have been targeted in this insane sectarian war, and even places of worship and religious gatherings have not been spared.

Sectarian violence is not new to Pakistan, but there has been a steep rise in such attacks in recent years with the onset of worsening governance and diminishing state authority. While the administration silently watches the situation drift into anarchy, armed murderers continue to carry out their deadly operations with impunity. That these militants can carry explosives and sophisticated firearms and move freely around indicates the complete collapse of the security agencies. The callous indifference to escalating sectarian violence has caused a complete loss of public faith in the government and security agencies. The state has failed to stop slaughter after slaughter and to provide even basic security to its hapless citizens, leaving them to the mercy of murderers.

While Balochistan, particularly its capital Quetta, has become the main centre of gravity for Sunni sectarian militancy in recent years, it is certainly not an isolated provincial phenomenon. The problem is much more deeply rooted and has links with the terrorist networks operating in Punjab and other parts of the country. Although the rise of Sunni sectarian militancy is relatively new to Balochistan, the province has witnessed some of the most gruesome carnage in recent years. The ghastly massacre of Hazara Shias is shocking even by Pakistan's bloody standards, and is a sinister attempt to systematically annihilate an entire community because of its faith. Though technically outlawed, sectarian outfits operate freely and openly promote their toxic worldview through hate literature.

The massive escalation in sectarian terrorist actions in recent years highlights the growing nexus between Sunni extremist groups such

as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and the TTP. The tendency of political parties and security agencies to draw a (misplaced) distinction between the two is disastrous. One reason for this selective approach is the continued sympathy for some of these groups.

The issue of sectarian militancy in Pakistan does not have piecemeal solutions. A comprehensive national counterterrorism and counter-radicalization policy is needed to deal with this growing menace. There is also a need to further strengthen anti-terrorism laws: under the existing laws, it is impossible to convict any terrorist. Foreign funding for radical madressahs and sectarian outfits has also contributed greatly to fuelling religious extremism in the country. The security agencies, too, have propped up extremist groups in the past with disastrous consequences, and a massive effort is now required to dismantle these networks.

Pakistan has long been the centre of a proxy war that has fuelled sectarian violence. Radical Islamic groups under the patronage of certain Arab countries have recruited jihadis to fight alongside the Syrian rebels – a highly dangerous situation that undermines the country's security. These are all symptoms of a state that is losing control. What is most worrying is the failure of the political and military leadership to devise a coherent and overarching strategy to deal with this twin menace. This has given the militants more space in which to operate.

Pakistan's battle against militancy is also linked to the war in Afghanistan. With the US-led war in Afghanistan spilling over into Pakistan's lawless border regions, the latter has now become a battleground for Taliban- and Al Qaeda-backed militants. The ensuing militant violence that has left thousands dead has had an enormous impact on Pakistan's economy and politics. The country's greatest nightmare is the prospect of an escalating civil war in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of foreign troops. Control of the Taliban even in parts of Afghanistan would give a huge boost to the Pakistani Taliban fighting Pakistani forces in the tribal regions. This would be a disastrous situation for Pakistan.

## 7. The Shrinking Authority of the State

### 7. 1. The Tribal Cauldron

The security challenges of the tribal areas lie at the heart of a wider threat to regional and global stability. Pakistan's battle for control over this lawless region has assumed much greater importance with the approach of the Afghan endgame. These semi-autonomous regions have long remained major centres of cross-border tension as they share a 600-kilometre frontier with Afghanistan.

Often described as the most dangerous place on earth, the region serves as a haven for Al Qaeda operatives, Pakistani militants, and jihadists from across the Islamic world, as well as for Muslim radicals from the US and Europe who come for ideological instruction and to plot terrorist attacks in their home countries. Once mainly a springboard for cross-border attacks into Afghanistan, the region now harbours militants who have taken the battle deep inside Pakistan itself.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

The ungovernable borderland separates Pakistan and Afghanistan with ethnic Pashtuns on either side who have long despised and ignored the dividing Durand Line. With a population of more than four million, comprising mostly Pashtun tribes, the area straddling the Durand Line has become a major battleground for Al Qaeda and its affiliated groups after the US invasion of Afghanistan. Known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the region is divided into seven agencies or administrative units with a total area of 2,700 km: Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, and North and South Waziristan.

The perpetuation of the old colonial administrative arrangement is largely to blame for the continuing lawlessness, neglect, and social and economic backwardness of the region. Its tribes people are deprived of even basic civil and political rights. Normal Pakistani laws do not apply here and all power rests with a centrally appointed Political Agent. The Taliban insurgency and ensuing military operation have resulted in the collapse of even the old order, creating a huge vacuum.

A major challenge for the Pakistani government and the military is to enforce control over the lawless territories. Military action alone, however, does not offer a long-term solution to what is a complex problem. Pakistan also needs to take urgent measures to end the alienation and backwardness of the tribal region. Despite having committed more than 100,000 troops, the military's efforts have yielded only questionable gains. The Taliban and Al Qaeda have shown themselves capable of regrouping and striking back after a defeat, and they have resumed attacks in areas that were thought to be secure.

Although American drone attacks have killed a number of senior Al Qaeda leaders, this has had little apparent effect on the group's operations. North Waziristan, the biggest of the seven tribal agencies, is now the eye of the storm, having become the main sanctuary of the TTP and other Pakistani militant groups driven from South Waziristan and other tribal regions. Pakistani military officials admit they cannot contain militant violence in the country without clearing North Waziristan of TTP sanctuaries.[13] The ongoing military operation that started in 2009 provides an opportunity to push for the long-delayed integration of the region with the rest of the country, thus ending its ambiguous semi-autonomous status. So far, however, there seems to be no clear policy for integrating the region into the mainstream.

### 7. 2. Balochistan: Pakistan's Other War

Pakistan's other war is being fought in the western province of Balochistan. The escalating Baloch separatist insurgency presents an equally serious threat to the country's stability and to the writ of the state. Rising incidents of violence and alleged extrajudicial killings by security forces in the province have drawn the concern of human rights organizations and the international community.

Since Balochistan became part of Pakistan in 1947, Baloch nationalists have led four insurgencies – in 1948, 1958/59, 1962/63 and 1973–77 – which were brutally suppressed by the state. Now a fifth is underway. An

**13.** Interview with senior army officers during a visit to N. Waziristan in 2013.

overwhelming majority of Baloch nationalists had rejected secession and struggled for autonomy within the framework of the Pakistani federation. State repression, however, blurred this division. The military seems to have contained the insurgency but has failed to win the trust of the alienated population or to effectively establish the writ of the state in a large part of the province. Although the operation was halted a few years ago, tribal 'death squads' allegedly propped up by the intelligence agencies remain active.[14]

Some hope of finding a political solution to the Balochistan problem emerged last year when the major nationalist parties ended their boycott and participated in the 2013 parliamentary elections. The situation is still far from stable, however, and the low-intensity insurgency has affected a large part of the province. The writ of the state and the criminal justice system in Balochistan has broken down. The jurisdiction of the police force is confined to 5 percent within town areas while vast swathes around the cities and towns have been left to the administration of ragtag Levies[15] whose loyalty is to the tribal chiefs rather than the state.

The tribal chiefs undermine the writ of the state and the rule of law in the name of community policing. The poor capacity of the Levies in 95 percent of the province has resulted in the Frontier Corps filling the void and extending its mandate from a border security force to a military police force maintaining order and patrolling the vast network of highways in the province.

## 7. 3. Karachi

Diminishing state authority and lawlessness are not confined to the remote tribal areas or insurgency-hit Balochistan, but also extend to Pakistan's biggest city – Karachi. With a population of 18 million, the city may have witnessed worse spates of violence in the past, but the present crumbling of state authority is unprecedented. The mayhem in the country's financial capital has, in many respects, come to resemble the lawlessness of the tribal areas. Violence in Karachi threatens to destabilize Pakistan both in terms of gross domestic product and disruptions to urban economic activity, both of which necessarily affect the national economy. Moreover, the ethnically diverse city is a battleground for major political parties and thus key to domestic political stability.

More than 7,000 people are estimated to have been killed in incidents of violence since 2008 as political parties, sectarian outfits, and crime mafias battle for domination.[16] Even this high casualty figure does not fully reflect the magnitude of the disorder gripping the metropolis. Patronized by political parties and sectarian groups, scores of criminal gangs vie for control over land and the city's other resources. Mafias have moved in, filling the vacuum left by a failing state. What is most frightening is the prospect of the city becoming the new battleground for the Taliban and other militant groups. The breakdown of law and order and the bloody strife among the allegedly armed wings of political parties have given immense space to militants fleeing army operations in Waziristan and other tribal territories.

14. According to the Human Rights Watch, around 300 corpses of disappeared persons were discovered in 2011.
15. A paramilitary force that operates as a law enforcement agency tasked with maintaining law and order in the province.
16. Conflict Dynamics in Karachi. Huma Yousuf . USIP. October 2012.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

With the presence of thousands of fugitives, the city has become perhaps the biggest sanctuary for militants. They find little difficulty in blending into large immigrant populations from the northwest. Hundreds of radical madressahs across the city not only provide them with shelter and logistical support but also with a constant supply of recruits for militant activities. The militants have also benefited hugely from the criminalization of politics and ethnic tension, and recent high-profile terrorist attacks on military and other security installations demonstrate their growing strength.

Some recent statements from the TTP threatening to target political leaders and enforce Shari'a in the city are indicative of the Taliban's growing stridency. Talibanization has been noticed in certain Karachi suburbs. Not surprisingly, some security officials compare Karachi's situation with that of North Waziristan, the tribal agency that is described as the centre of gravity for militants and terrorism.[17]

Today, the situation in Karachi is arguably far more complex and volatile than in the 1980s and 1990s, when thousands perished in ethnic and political violence. Never before has the city witnessed such a breakdown of government and law enforcement.

Some of its problems are rooted in the city's fast-changing demographic profile. According to some estimates, close to a million people are added to its population each year, making Karachi the fastest-growing city in the world. The massive influx of immigrants from the northwest in recent years has changed the city's ethnic balance significantly, reinforcing parochial politics. The tug of war among the political parties is a manifestation of the city's new demographic reality and ensuing political dynamics: it is a battle for control of Pakistan's biggest city.

This power struggle has taken a violent turn owing to parties' alleged patronage of criminal elements involved in land grabbing, arms smuggling, and extortion. According to some studies, more than 200 well-armed criminal gangs with political patronage currently operate in Karachi, earning it the dubious reputation of being one of the most violent cities in the world.[18] What makes the situation more dangerous is the inability of the government to crack down on perpetrators, many of whom are said to come from within the ranks of the ruling parties.

It is unprecedented for the ruling parties themselves to be seen as perpetrators of this bloodbath. The turf battle has left thousands of people dead over the past four years. The politicization of law enforcement agencies has compromised their professionalism, rendering them pliant and ineffective. At least 40 percent of the Karachi police force has reportedly been recruited on political grounds rather than on merit.[19] Many members are said to have a criminal record. The fear of repercussions contributes heavily to professional police officers' failure to proactively crack down on politically connected criminals.

## 8. Conclusion

The crisis of the Pakistani state is rooted deep in the political fault lines perpetuated by an oligarchic elite. The extractive nature of the state

**17.** Ibid
**18.** Conflict Dynamics in Karachi. Huma Yousuf . USIP. October 2012.
**19.** http://www.asiasentinel.com/society/karachi-burning-and-dying/

THE CONSTRUCTION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF PAKISTAN: THE INSTITUTIONAL WRIT OF THE STATE

institutions has stunted the growth of an inclusive democratic process. Long periods of military rule alternated by ineffective elected civilian rule have thwarted the development of institutional democracy. In 2008, Pakistan returned to civilian democracy at the end of a nine-year-long military regime. Despite the problems of transitioning from military to civilian rule, the democratically elected government completed its full five-year term. In 2013, democracy made another stride forward when, for the first time in Pakistan's history, power was transferred from one elected government to another – it was a sign of democracy finally taking root in the country.

Strengthening its democratic institutions is key to Pakistan's struggle for political and economic stability. Enormous challenges confront the fragile democratic process: the absence of good governance, weakening state institutions, shrinking state authority, and growing violent militancy and religious extremism.

The military's diminishing political power post-2007 presents an ideal situation for the elected government to assert its authority in various policy realms. Though the military continues to dominate national security policy and influence foreign affairs, its political role has certainly receded. This provides significant political space for the elected civilian government to focus on critical issues of governance and on strengthening democratic institutions. An assertive superior judiciary has also transformed the power matrix, further shrinking the room available for any extra-constitutional intervention.

Undoubtedly, military versus civilian supremacy remains a major issue that has to be resolved for democracy to be sustainable. But it is the increasing militancy and religious extremism that are the principal impediments. The country cannot move forward without combating these retrogressive forces. It is more important at this point to unite the forces fighting militancy, terrorism, and violent extremism. Unfortunately, political forces are divided on this critical issue, threatening the pluralistic democratic system. The situation has become much more serious particularly with the ambivalence of the Sharif government, which has lost its monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force by embracing militant outfits, challenging the very existence of the state.

Despite its structural weaknesses and the problems of state power and governance, a representative democracy offers the only way forward for Pakistan. The democratic government needs to undertake structural reforms to regain the writ of the state and economic stability. The Sharif government has rightly assigned top priority to the revival of the economy, but this cannot be possible without addressing the problem of militancy and violent extremism. What is most troubling is Mr Sharif's ambiguous position on these critical issues.

The future of democracy also depends on how civil-military relations evolve under Mr Sharif's stewardship. This was the biggest problem during his previous two terms. For the military leadership too, it is time for retrospection and bridge building. There is a need for complete control by the elected civilian government to take charge and define a clear foreign and security policy direction. This is an evolutional process and civilian supremacy cannot be established through confrontations

ZAHID HUSSAIN

215

## Afterword

The political power structure in Pakistan has once again tilted towards military. It seems extremely difficult for the civilian government to regain lost ground, amidst governance failure and the breaking down of consensus among the major political parties to defend the democratic political process. The perception of the civil-military leadership being on the same page is a pure fiction.

The clout of the military has grown further in the aftermath of the Peshawar school massacre in December 2014, since the role of the military in internal security has further increased, and it has become more assertive.

Pakistan's battle for North Waziristan entered a critical stage. Many of the areas are now believed to have been cleared of insurgents. Yet, there is a long way to go before the territory can be fully secured. The terrorist network that threatened national as well as regional security has definitely been disrupted, but not fully destroyed. There are still strong pockets of resistance and the militants are holding on to some of their bases, with many are taking refuge along and across the Afghan border.

The military operation in the tribal areas has none the less brought down the level of militant violence in the country. Though sectarian and religious violence has continued unabated, the capacity of the militant groups to launch major terrorist attacks has certainly been curtailed. A major challenge for the civil and military leadership is the rehabilitation of more than one million people displaced by the conflict .

Pakistan needs to take urgent measures to end the alienation and backwardness of the tribal population and the ongoing military operation provides an opportunity to push for the long-delayed integration of the region into Pakistan and end its semi-autonomous status. An alienated population gives space to insurgents, further shrinking the control of the state.

**Zahid Hussain**
2016

# CHAPTER THREE:
# KEY POLITICAL & SOCIAL ISSUES

- PREAMBLE: AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN:
  A HISTORIC COMPARISON

  *Jawed Ludin*

- POWER TO THE PERIPHERY? THE ELUSIVE CONSENSUS
  ON HOW TO DECENTRALISE AFGHANISTAN

  *Michael Semple*

- AFGHANISTAN´S ETHNIC DIVIDES

  *Abubakar Siddique*

- THE CHANGING NATURE OF POWER
  AND SOVEREIGNTY IN AFGHANISTAN

  *Aziz Hakimi*

# PREAMBLE: AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN: A HISTORIC COMPARISON

## Jawed Ludin

*Former deputy foreign minister of Afghanistan, and former chief of staff to President Karzai. He currently runs a number of private sector initiatives in Afghanistan, including ANHAM and Mithra Associates LLC.*

Despite their common heritage, demographic similarities and deeply shared interests as neighbours, Afghanistan and Pakistan today are two very different countries standing wide apart from each other on most measures of analysis. Notwithstanding some simplified aggregating characterizations, such as the US-coined "AfPak" grouping, Afghanistan and Pakistan present fundamentally different sets of issues and challenges to regional and global security. This distinctiveness is even truer when applied beyond security to other social, economic and political factors.

Socially, the two countries are undoubtedly linked by deep natural affinities. The Pashtun and Baloch populations in both countries are the two major overlapping communities that bind the two nations together. Beyond these demographic overlaps too, the two peoples enjoy historic, cultural, religious and linguistic ties. However, divergent historic experiences, and the evolving influence other social and political factors, have significantly contributed to the emergence of relatively distinct Afghan and Pakistani cultures, manifesting in distinct social mores among populations on both sides of the Durand Line.

Among the key cultural factors is the role of religion in the two societies. While enjoying a much more sophisticated civil society, advanced level of education and greater exposure to the outside world, the Pakistani society has treated religion as an inescapable political reality lying at the heart of its concept of nationhood. Afghanistan, on the other hand, has been a deeply religious society in the most traditional sense. As a result, it was mainly in Pakistan that we witnessed the birth and exponential growth of political Islam, including some of its extreme and violent manifestations. In Afghanistan, where a separation of the divine and the temporal spheres always existed in its most primordial form, political Islam was a purely imported phenomenon. Even today, several generations into the growth of political Islam in Afghanistan, Afghan Islamists look to Pakistani clergy and Madrassas as their collective ideological cornerstone.

Politically, the two polities have been shaped differently by their respective historic experiences. The colonial legacy, as well as the event of the creation of Pakistan, namely the Indian Partition of 1947, gave character not only to the Pakistani state but also to its society. Compared to Afghanistan's rudimentary state, which resulted from painstaking state-building efforts, Pakistan in 1947 inherited an evolved state structure with a functioning bureaucracy. However, the original imbalance between a highly developed military structure inherited from the British Raj and a less developed civil society quickly led to a distortion of the democratic polity in Pakistan. By comparison, in Afghanistan, where the deeply tribal nature of the society seriously inhibited the state-building process, the problem of civil military imbalance has rarely arisen. Other challenges aside, this bodes well for the future of its nascent democracy today.

Militarily, the two neighbours have very little in common. Inheriting a highly developed military establishment from its colonial precursors, Pakistan has always been considered one of the major military powers in the world. Its acquisition of nuclear weapon in the 1980s, further cemented that position on the regional and international level. Afghanistan, by contrast, received no colonial legacy and throughout its history struggled with development of its meager military capability. The military histories of the two countries have historically influenced the political and security orientation of both countries in very different ways, one acquiring an ambitious, expansionist outlook in the region, while the other becoming volatile, weak and generally inwardly focused.

Economically, the comparison between Afghanistan and Pakistan is determined above all by the huge disparity in population. Beyond the population factor too, the two countries are hardly on comparable grounds. Where Afghanistan has for centuries struggled as an economic backwater, Pakistan was – in the later half of the twentieth century – a dynamic developing economy. However, for two decades now, Pakistan has been afflicted by severe economic decline, which is underpinned by a host of systemic reasons, from the security-centric view of its dominant military establishment, to the insurmountable level of corruption in the civilian sphere. By contrast, Afghanistan, while still a long way from establishing a sustainable economic base, shows signs of modest promise. Needless to point out that economic regeneration and prosperity in both Afghanistan and Pakistan crucially depend on the extent to which both countries manage to deal with their menacing security challenges and foster regional economic co-operation.

Finally, on the global security front, where the "AfPak" characterization has helped cement the perception of Afghanistan and Pakistan as one of the epicentres of violent extremism, the fate of the two countries could hardly be more conflicting. It is true that both countries face and suffer alike at the hands of extremist and terrorist groups, including a trans-boundary Taliban network, but their responses to the threat of extremism are deeply contradictory. While Afghanistan has massively suffered as a victim, Pakistan has for years abetted and promoted Islamic radicalization, frequently using it as an instrument of policy. It continues to do so today. Pakistan is also one of the countries where the state's sponsorship of terrorism abroad has contributed instrumentally to the growth of radicalization and extremism in the entire region.

Having said the above, all the differences aside, Afghanistan and Pakistan cannot escape the overriding reality and necessity of working together. This is not only demanded by the plight of their people who, in another deep human bond, share the pain of suffering from similar challenges, but it is also something that the world as whole expects of the two countries. Indeed, seldom before were two countries of greater concern for the security of the world than Afghanistan and Pakistan today.

JAWED LUDIN

**Michael Semple**

*Senior Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy,
Harvard Kennedy School*

## 1. Context

In June 2012,a maverick former Member of the Afghan Parliament appeared on television in Kabul and declared that, while attending an opposition rally, he had apprehended that the movement's advocacy of decentralised democracy amounted to a campaign to break up Afghanistan's unitary state. The opposition dismissed the criticism as groundless and revealed evidence that the national intelligence service had orchestrated the MP's claims.

The clash was just a minor episode in the complex controversy over how to decentralise Afghanistan. It illustrates three characteristic features of the decentralisation controversy:

Firstly the issues around decentralisation are highly topical.

Secondly there is a tradition of manipulation and misrepresentation in the debate.

Thirdly the debate is highly polarised.

The reason for the acrimony in the decentralisation debate is that it tends to proxy for other contentious issues. In conventional political rhetoric, Afghan Pashtun leaders equate the preservation of strong central government with the protection of their leading role in the state. Therefore proposals for democratisation and decentralisation,which would be inoffensive in other contexts, can, in the polarised Afghan debate, be construed as challenging the fundamental rationale of the state.

Traditional controversy aside, the latest focus on decentralisation in Afghanistan arises from the challenges of the transition process. The underlying issue is what changes to the structure of government might give Afghanistan the best chance of coping with the withdrawal of NATO forces. Decentralisation has emerged as one of the possible governance solutions on the basis that re-balancing power between centre and periphery might help overcome alienation of groups that have hitherto opted out of the political system and provide for broader-based participation.

*Michael Semple is a scholar and practitioner focused on conflict resolution in Afghanistan and South Asia. He is a Senior Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Harvard Kennedy School and has previously worked for the European Union and United Nations.*

This paper considers the prospects for decentralisation tocontribute to a more viable political system in Afghanistan.

It does this firstly by identifying the scope of debate on decentralisation and the principal models of decentralisation available to contemporary Afghanistan (Section 2). It then highlights how centre-periphery tensions have been addressed in the development of the Afghan state (Section 3). It considers how the issue of decentralisation is dealt with in Afghan political rhetoric (Section 4). It goes on to outline current government practice in terms of centre-periphery roles and responsibilities (Section 5). It addresses the political economy of centralisation and decentralisation, including how this tension relates to ethnic competition, the identity of the state, and control over patronage resources (Section 6). It then identifies the main decentralisation policy options and how to pursue them (Sections 7 and 8). The paper places the idea of Afghan decentralisation in the regional context, witha particular focus on Pakistan (Sections 9 and 10). Finally, the paper considers the road ahead and which approach to the decentralisation debate is most likely to advance the cause of Afghan peace and stability (Section 11).

## 2. The Contemporary Centralisation–Decentralisation Debate

Government in Afghanistan is organised on three levels. Central government includes the presidency, a council of ministers and their ministries (the executive), plus the national parliament. The second tier of government is the province. The senior-most official in each of the thirty-four provinces (*wilayat*) is a governor, or *wali,* alongside an elected advisory council. The third tier of government is the district or *uluswali*. The provinces are sub-divided into an average of eight districts each. The senior-most official in the district is the *uluswal*. Although the constitution provides for elections to district councils, no such elections have ever been held and instead various ad hoc district councils have emerged alongside the appointed *uluswals*. *Walis* and *uluswals* are all appointed by the centre, under the authority of the President and wield considerable power within the areas they administer.

The contemporary debate on decentralisation revolves around a series of practical issues on how to reorganise these structures of democratic government.

The most concrete proposal for decentralisation is simply that district and provincial governors should be elected by the people in the areas they serve, rather than appointed by the President. In this sense decentralisation would be effected by democratisation. Support for the idea of decentralisation has also often been linked to support for enhancing the role of parliament relative to the presidency. Other practical proposals for decentralisation include the idea of strengthening the sub-national tiers of government, by expanding their role and enhancing their access to resources. At this level of practical proposals, the debate on decentralisation thus does not readily divide into mutually exclusive visions of a centralised versus a decentralised state. The mainstream debate is really about degrees of decentralisation, rather than for-or-against. Meanwhile the issue of the possible merits of a federal system is treated as 'off limits' in the mainstream debate. Instead,

participants in this debate take the unitary state as given and consider how best to organise it. However, this does not stop commentators periodically denouncing others as being federalist, even if the person criticised has never explicitly advocated federalism.

## 3. Centralisation & Decentralisation in Afghanistan's Constitutional History

The tension between centre and periphery has been one of the key themes in the development of the Afghan state since its foundation in 1747.

The state's founder, Ahmad Shah, and his successors manoeuvred to gain some autonomy for the sovereign relative to the powerful Durrani tribal leaders on whom they originally depended for military force and political support. Some of the early moves by Afghan sovereigns to strengthen the centre relative to power-brokers included shifting the capital from Kandahar to Kabul, employing a force of Persian mercenaries and inducting other Pashtun tribes (the Ghilzai) into the power structure. Meanwhile, Ahmad Shah's successive conquests gave the territorial building blocks of the Afghan state. The territories Ahmad Shah incorporated into the empire were designated as provinces and generally governed by a prince. The nucleus of central government formed around the court. At the end of the nineteenth century Amir AbdurRahman (ruled 1880-1901) took advantage of external (British) backing to launch a process of internal consolidation. This involved a series of military campaigns to assert his control throughout the remaining Afghan territory and resulted in him achieving more autonomy for the centre than any of his predecessors.

The original struggle for autonomy pitted Pashtun kings primarily against other Pashtun powerbrokers. However the territory over which AbdurRahman consolidated control included a multi-ethnic population, with Uzbeks, Tajiks and Hazaras constituting a majority in the north and centre. The strategy adopted for extending government across this multi-ethnic space has been characterised as "internal colonialism". The main aspects of Afghan internal colonialism were that the rulers reserved jobs in the area administration and officer corps for a Pashtun elite and used grants of land or grazing rights to Pashtuns in the centre and north and along the borders to plant loyal populations.

Subsequent Afghan rulers maintained the unitary structure of government which had consolidated under AbdurRahman.

During the twentieth century a series of constitutions augmented this structure by developing a constitutional monarchy and eventually a republic and adding a parliament. The first clause of King Amanullah's 1923 constitution states "*All parts and areas of the country are under the authority of His Majesty the King and are to be treated as a single unit without discrimination between different parts of the country*". This constitution also provided for provincial councils, with a mix of appointed and elected members, to advise on the development of their areas and channel petitions regarding the performance of government officials. The constitution prescribed "decentralisation of authority" as the first principle under which the provinces would be governed. The operationalisation of decentralisation within the context of the Afghan

MICHAEL SEMPLE

unitary state meant that ministries were to establish a presence in the provinces and try to deal with residents' issues at that level, without the need for referral to the capital. The next major innovation came in 1931 under Nadir Shah (ruled 1929-1933), with the establishment of a bi-cameral national parliament, with members from all administrative units of the country. Under Nadir Shah, these sub-national units consisted of divisions (*naibulhukumat*), major provinces (*hukumat e ala*) and minor provinces (*hukumat e kalan*). Zahir Shah's constitution from 1964 is famous as the country's most liberal constitution, as it incorporated an elaborate charter of citizens' rights. However it also proclaimed the operative principle to be one of "centralisation" and maintained continuity in the structure of the state. The king appointed a prime minister and council of ministers at the centre, who in turn appointed provincial administrations. At the centre, parliament had power to legislate. But in the provinces elected councils served merely to advise the administration on development and welfare. Zahir Shah simultaneously presided over a major reorganisation of sub-national administrative units. The 1964 reform replaced Nadir Shah's sub-national structure of five major and four minor provinces with a shift to twenty-six, much smaller, provinces. Daud Khan's constitution, adopted in 1977, only operated for a year before the revolution. It went even further than its predecessors in concentration of power in that it dropped all reference to provincial administration or elected provincial councils and proclaimed that Afghanistan is administered according to the principle of centralisation. After the 1978 coup successive governments further proliferated administrative divisions, so that modern Afghan provinces span a smaller proportion of the national territory and economy than their predecessors and their administrations are far smaller than that of the central government. Although the rebellions against central government after 1978 allowed the emergence of several de facto autonomous areas, all of these, except an enclave in the North East, collapsed by 1998. For their last three years the Taliban restored the old administrative structures and ruled Afghanistan along traditional centralised lines.

The post-Taliban political order was based on the 2001 Bonn Accord which took as its template for provisional government structures the 1964 constitution, minus provisions referring to the monarchy. This implied a unitary state, organised on the principle of centralisation, with provincial administrations appointed by the centre. The elected components had to await the later constitution-making. Meanwhile, however, the government established by Bonn continued the proliferation process by adding a 33rd province (Panjshir) and 34th (Daikondi).

## 4. Why Decentralisation is Offensive to the Status Quo

Firstly,the successive twentieth century constitutions clearly established centralisation within the framework of a unitary state as the "status quo" position. Advocacy of any innovation, such as elected provincial governors, therefore involves challenging almost a century of constitutional tradition.

Secondly, even when discussions on structure of the state are conducted without reference to ethnic categories, participants in the Afghan debate

assume that positions correlate with ethnic politics. Pashtun political figures have favoured the unitary state to safeguard their collective interest. They have historically been dominant at the centre and have been able to use that dominance to protect the position of Pashtun minorities in the northern or central provinces. Conversely, advocates of more power to the provinces are open to suspicions of deliberately trying to weaken Pashtun power. It is in this sense that debate of decentralisation is widely understood to be a proxy for ethnic politics.

Thirdly, there is a long tradition of cultivated xenophobia in Afghan nationalist discourse. One of the traditional themes is that of foreign powers trying to dismember the country and refusing to accept Afghanistan as a unitary state. It is therefore relatively easy for Afghan commentators to suggest links between discussion of decentralisation and this pre-defined existential threat.

Finally the provinces, at least their pre-1964 versions, have a history longer than the Afghan state and have previously been incorporated into other polities – Persia's Khorasan, the Khanates of Central Asia and the Moghul Empire. Therefore critics of decentralisation have been able to raise fears that it could open the way for secession by the old provinces.

## 5. The Structure of Government & the Current State of Decentralisation

The current structure of government in Afghanistan is based on the 2004 constitution. This is typically described as being one of the most centralised models in the world because of the concentration of power in the presidency. However in reality, the December 2003 *loya Jirga* resulted in a rather nuanced constitutional settlement. The main issues at stake were the balance of power between the president and the parliament, and the relationship between language and national identity. The debate did not extend to any serious challenge to the unitary nature of the state or proposals for devolution or federalism. Instead those who wanted to challenge the concentration of power in the presidency argued for strengthening of the power of the parliament. Ethnic blocks consolidated among the delegates during the constitutional debate, with Pashtuns tending to back the original draft and non-Pashtuns tending to back amendments. Eventually the agreement took the form of a grand bargain. The centralised system remained, but parliamentary powers were augmented with some additional checks over the executive. The languages of the small ethnic groups received official recognition, but a national anthem was adopted in Pashto.

In keeping with the precedent set in the 1923 constitution, the 2004 constitution provides for advisory provincial councils, as well as elected bodies at the district level and in municipalities. Subsequent legislation to establish the powers of the councils deliberately kept them toothless. However the elected councils adopted roles in their provinces which reflected varying local realities. The classic example was Kandahar Province, where Ahmad Wali Karzai, brother of the President, became chairman, and the provincial council won acceptance as one of the important political players in the province. In other provinces, governors found it expedient to co-opt councils as part of a strategy of outreach to the local population.

Meanwhile a spectrum of non-constitutional bodies, supported by central government and donors, occupied some of the space which the constitution had anticipated would belong to elected councils.

Actual practice of governance has been somewhat more decentralised in practice than was provided for in the 2004 constitution. This is because the ability of central government to enforce its will over local elites has been constrained by under-developed institutions. The writ of the Afghan state extends to the multiple administrative centres but not to the rural hinterland surrounding them. The central government has found it expedient to accommodate interest groups at the provincial level. The classic example of this is in Balkh Province, where one of the local strongmen who helped expel the Taliban in 2001 has had a long tenure as governor and has thus emerged as one of the key power-brokers in the north and successfully presided over stability and economic development. Likewise, although district governors, *uluswals*, are also supposed to receive appointments from the centre, many provincial governors have managed to wrest control of appointment power, by inserting supposedly temporary caretakers and fending off attempts by the centre to send "officially" appointed replacements.

Ministries remain entirely centralised in the sense of retaining budgeting, planning and decision making in the capital. Insofar as they deploy personnel to the provinces, these teams are subject to the authority of Kabul and are merely there in a service delivery role. But as another example of the variety in practice of centre-periphery relations, the big service delivery ministries and security organs have found it cost effective to establish regional hubs. They use the hubs, in the main cities, which roughly correspond to the Nadir Shah era administrative centres, to provide logistics and management support to surrounding provinces.

## 6. The Issues at Stake

Demands within Afghanistan for reform of state structures and decentralisation are driven by a range of interests and concerns. Some of the proposals for decentralisation are ostensibly technical and related to generic ideas on governance as advocated in many countries, but nonetheless raise fundamental issues over the identity of the state power distribution within it.

### (i) The balance of power in the multi-ethnic state

Stances on decentralisation versus centralisation have come to stand as a proxy for national level distribution of power. The alignment of political interests witnessed in the 2003 constitutional debate on presidential versus parliamentary systems is now reflected in the debate over decentralisation. The strongest support for continuation of the centralised system comes from Pashtun groups, in keeping with the traditional idea that a strong central government is the best guarantee of Pashtun privilege. The strongest support for decentralisation comes from Uzbek, Hazara or Tajik leaders who have concluded that shifting

power away from Kabul would safeguard their control of the non-Pashtun majority areas of the North and Centre. This is primarily a defensive strategy intended to insulate them from developments in the Pashtun majority areas where they consider the rise of pro-Taliban sympathy to be a threat to their security and ideas of social policy.

## (ii) The politics of appointments and the relationship between elected bodies and appointed officials

A more concrete concern in the politics of decentralisation is the issue of control over appointments. Given the much-noted dominance of patronage relationships in Afghanistan, control over public sector appointments is fundamental to political practice. Centralisation of appointment authority has been important in the emergence of a national level patronage system, which revolves around Kabul. Local power-brokers anywhere in the country wanting to get their clients appointed to positions such as the district police chief or *uluswal* have been obliged to travel to Kabul and engage with the power structure there, directly lobbying contacts in the presidential palace, the Ministry of Interior, or Members of Parliament. Those advocating decentralisation hope to shift control of appointments away from the centre and to make appointments subject to democratic accountability within the provinces.

## (iii) Natural resources and revenues

The geography of sources of public revenue and exploitable natural resources underlies the decentralisation debate. Historically, one of the principal sources of revenue available to the Afghan state has been the customs on trade passing through the main border crossings. During the civil war of the 1990's, control over these border crossings provided the revenue required to run the most successful de facto autonomous regions. The Eastern provinces depended on the Torkham customs post. The Western provinces depended on the Islamqala and Torghundi customs posts and the North Western provinces depended on the Heiraton customs post. The process of restoration of central authority after 2001 involved wresting control of these customs revenues from the "strong-men", who initially controlled the main provinces after the fall of the Taliban.

In the future, control of minerals extraction can be expected to be a major issue between centre and provinces. Minerals are widely distributed in Afghanistan. However, easily exploitable fossil fuels are mainly located in the North. The potential of this to become an issue in the decentralisation debate was amply and immediately illustrated in June 2012, when government figures orchestrated complaints against General Dostam for disrupting work on an oil contract in northern Saripol Province. Although in this case, the complaints seemed to be stage-managed as part of government tactical dealing with the opposition, they highlighted real issues over the ability of central government to maintain consent to its award of contracts in far-flung provinces if employment benefits do not reach the people of the areas where mining activities take place.

MICHAEL SEMPLE

### (iv) Accountability of service provision

One version of the case for decentralisation simply relates it to the process of governance reform. It promises to boost accountability of public servants to the constituencies they serve. Under the current system, administrators and ministry officials serve at the pleasure of appointment authorities far from their place of duty. Their tenure and promotion depend upon maintaining the blessing of superiors in Kabul, something which is a function of their ability to access the patronage politics of the capital. The case for having locally elected officials is simply that it would give district electorates an opportunity to reward officials they trusted to deliver on local needs and to remove those who failed to deliver.

### (v) Divergent cultural impulses

Despite Afghanistan's high degree of religious homogeneity, there is also a significant degree of cultural diversity. This means that the cultural attributes of leaders or officials who are likely to inspire public confidence, and public expectations of how the administration will accommodate the idea of socially acceptable behaviour, varies from district to district. In part this correlates with ethnicity – each ethnic group has its own version of customary law. Patterns of religious observance, the role of the clergy, ideas on the role of women, all vary by ethnic group and across areas. The most stark contrasts however are not inter-ethnic, but between urban and rural populations. The system of appointing officials centrally means that there is no guarantee that those appointed will be socially acceptable, or will accommodate local practices. Ultimately, it is this aspect of centralisation which has given rise to some of the fears of a political accommodation of the Taliban. Critics of the Taliban seek safeguards against Taliban sympathisers being appointed to administer those areas where people considered Taliban enforced religious observance to be alien to their way of life.

### (vi) The power of the "warlords" and the "mafia"

A specific set of historic circumstances in the wake of the collapse of the PDPA government in 1992 opened the way for the de facto regional administrations of the 1990's. One of the reasons for widespread support for the restoration of central authority during the 2002-4 period was a desire to prevent any return to an era of warlord supremacy. The reality of governance under the renewed centralised system has fallen far short of expectations. Nevertheless, proponents of centralisation have continued to invoke the negative associations of the warlord era.

### (vii) Migration, markets and economic rights

Decentralisation has potentially serious implications for many Afghans' livelihood strategies. Maps showing ethnically defined settlement patterns (Pashtuns in the south and east, Hazaras in the centre, Uzbeks in the north etc) seriously under-state the extent to which these groups operate

within a national space and have developed livelihood strategies which depend upon labour and commodity markets around the country. Thus, for example, Pashtuns trade in the North and Hazaras labour in Kabul and the North and buy land in the West. Although there is little economic content to the decentralisation schemes currently in vogue, Pashtun elites can be expected to back a centralised system as the best guarantee of their continued economic access to the non-Pashtun majority areas.

### (viii) The social and economic basis of Afghanistan's administrative units

Afghanistan's sub-national units tend to have well established corporate identities, with a capacity to transcend arbitrary schemes to reform, consolidate or sub-divide them. The contemporary scheme of provinces and districts is superimposed upon a complex history of government in the region. There is an underlying economic, social and physical geographic logic, relating to historic trade patterns and cultural boundaries and to the status of administrative centres. The principal administrative centres - Nadir Shah's provinces, or Zahir Shah's grade one provinces - were mainly major commercial centres serving a large hinterland. This applies to Kandahar, Herat, MazariSherif, Gardez and Kabul itself. Cities like Herat and MazariSherif also function as religious and cultural centres and network hubs for the population.

## 7. The Decentralisation Agenda

### Decentralisation and the art of the possible

Remarkably few concrete proposals for decentralising the Afghan state have emerged within Afghanistan itself, despite the perpetual questioning of the role of the presidency and central government. However any progress towards decentralisation can be expected to be guided by ideas which have emerged in Afghan politics. Internationally, approaches to decentralisation have embraced both devolution and federalism. Devolution preserves the notion of a unitary state, with sovereignty exercised exclusively by the central government, which can choose, at its discretion, to pass administrative functions and decisions to sub-national tiers of government. Under federalism, sovereignty is shared between the national government and sub-national units and the allocation of responsibility between them is governed by a compact which the centre is not free to abrogate unilaterally. In the realm of practical politics Afghan schemes for decentralisation tend to be limited schemes of devolution, stopping far short of anything which could be considered federalism. Afghanistan has many of the characteristics which have pushed other countries to embrace federalism, such as a high degree of ethno-linguistic diversity and geographically distinct regions. However, the near-sacrosanct status of the notion of the unitary state in Afghan political discourse means that federalism has little practical relevance and that realistic options for decentralisation are confined to limited devolution of powers and functions from the centre.

MICHAEL SEMPLE

## Role adjustment of sub-national structures: the status quo versions of decentralisation

The Independent Directorate for Local Government (IDLG) is the government body charged with overseeing the development of sub-national structures. It has prepared a reform and development policy for local government. IDLG proposed measures work within the existing constitutional framework and administrative boundaries but anticipate an incremental expansion of the role of provincial councils and activation of councils at the district and village level. They focus on management of the relationship between the provincial councils and the provincial governors and their administrations. The spirit of the IDLG policy is a reinforcement of the provincial council role in advising on local development.  However, it proposes to make them more effective by mandating oversight of the executive agencies at the provincial level. It also envisages a role for provincial councils in budgeting, through scrutiny and budget requests to be submitted by the provincial authorities to the centre.

## Elected local officials – an opposition approach to decentralisation

The core opposition proposal so far articulated is that the senior officials at provincial and district levels, the *walis* and *uluswals*, should be directly elected, in a break with Afghan administrative tradition of central appointment. If ever enacted, the proposal would represent a major transfer of power from the centre to the periphery in that *uluswals* and *walis* wield considerable formal and informal power, and control over their appointment is fundamental to the way in which the central government extends its writ in the provinces. A central government obliged to approach elected governors to implement its policies would be a significantly weaker government than anticipated in the 2004 constitution. As an example of the caution which the political opposition has adopted in advocating decentralisation, their current proposals for elected sub-national officials do not question the existing sub-national boundaries. They have thus stopped short of advocating reverting to the pre-1964 era boundaries, a proposal which might create more viable sub-national government units and thus risk alarming the guardians of the unitary state.

## Empowering the informal - bottom-up approaches to decentralisation

An alternative approach to decentralisation addresses practices of governance, rather than formal government structures. This draws on the insight that Afghanistan functions best when communities are enabled to exercise a high degree of self-government themselves with limited interaction with the formal state. This approach calls on central government to recognise the worth of informal community structures operating at the village level, and to instruct administrators to shift to a more consultative approach in concert with these *shuras* and *jirgas,* and to favour approaches to service delivery and even security in which community organisations take much of the responsibility. The IDLG policy endorses much of the spirit of the bottom-up proposals although there is scant evidence that this endorsement has been reflected in administrative practice.

## 8.  Routes to Reform

### How decentralisation might be enacted

One of the key issues facing proponents of decentralisation is how to enact their proposals.

Any radical version of decentralisation that implied changes to the structure of the state could only be achieved through constitutional amendment passed in a *Loya Jirga,* the electoral college empowered for this purpose. The difficulty of maintaining a political consensus to push through constitutional amendments would constitute a significant obstacle to any scheme which required such restructuring. However, there is ample scope for progress towards decentralisation within the 2004 constitution. The schemes for decentralisation, outlined above, which are already within the realm of practical politics, could be adopted without constitutional change. They depend upon reforming the roles and appointment procedures of sub-national entities which are already provided for in the constitution. Both the IDLG and opposition schemes could be enacted through legislation.

### Taliban reconciliation and the impetus towards decentralisation

The increased discussion of decentralisation options since about 2010 has been occasioned by the anticipation of an eventual accommodation between the Taliban insurgents and the existing Kabul-based political order. Some of the proponents of such an accommodation have argued that decentralisation offers a mechanism through which political blocs with sharply differing conceptions of the state and how public life should be organised could be accommodated in a cohesive political order. The underlying rationale is that if the Taliban were to achieve influence in Pashtun majority areas such as the South, South East and East, they could shape social or cultural policy and development strategies in those provinces, leaving non-Taliban majorities in the other regions to manage their provinces according to local politics and traditions. Although the distribution of power at the centre and control of remaining issues of national policy would still be open to contest, a devolved set-up accommodating the differing political blocs would increase the prospects of reaching this agreement at the centre. The opposition proposals for elected local officials accord with the spirit of this form of pluralism through decentralisation. However, there is no evidence of Taliban support for such schemes as they have tended to favour the traditional Pashtun political ideas of the unitary state and a strong central government.

A classic example of a scheme which has entered the political debate but which, for now, lies beyond the realm of practical politics is that of US Ambassador Blackwill, calling for de facto partition. This would allow the North to disassociate itself from the South if the latter seems set to be taken over by the Taliban. In terms of paths to change, the quasi-partition proposal illustrates the point that a failure to adopt reforms adequate to avert a crisis could precipitate extra-constitutional measures, little short of secession, when the crisis hit. Because of the risk of a political crisis prompting such unilateral action, the conclusions below point to the importance of consensus-building.

MICHAEL SEMPLE

## 9. The Relevance of the Pakistan Experience of Devolution

Pakistan's experience of reform of government structures is relevant to Afghanistan, both because there are significant similarities in the cultural context and because a large proportion of Afghans are familiar with Pakistan. Pakistan is also a multi-ethnic state which has struggled to accommodate competing visions of the state and ethnic interest groups. There is an important caveat in that Pakistan and Afghanistan have differing institutional histories and experiences of colonialism. However, the experiments in decentralisation in Pakistan under the decade of rule by General Musharraf offer salutary lessons for Afghanistan. The main lesson is that technically attractive schemes, implemented without broad political backing, may not survive a change of government, a lesson which is pertinent given that Afghanistan faces its own process of "political transition".

Pakistan's Musharraf era "Devolution Plan" was pioneered by the National Reconstruction Bureau. The plan received significant international support, on the basis that it delivered functional institutions and addressed a real democratic deficit. However, the process received rather less support from the national level political class, which combined to undo much of the reform. The first watering down of the reforms came in 2004 when Musharraf, as part of the process of building support for his own position, found himself obliged to accommodate traditional political power-brokers. These national politicians were accustomed to exerting political influence over the police and the district administrations, practices which the reforms had aimed to limit. The arrival of a new elected government and the departure of Musharraf as president led to the centrepiece of the reforms, the local government structures, being allowed to lapse. Where as Musharraf had developed the lowest tiers of government, the elected government concentrated on the higher level components of the federation and decentralised powers from the federal government to the provinces.

The main lesson of this experience is that an effective political strategy to maintain support for decentralisation is more critical to its success than the elegance of the institutional schemes devised by the governance experts.

## 10. Interests of the Regional Powers

The cultural and economic influence of Afghanistan's neighbours is visible in the country's regions. Indeed, one of the defining features of the natural regions of Afghanistan is the respective neighbour to which each of them is connected. In areas along the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier, Pakistani currency is customarily used for transactions; trade and labour migration links span the border; and a significant part of the population routinely accesses services, such as health care and education, located in Pakistan. Equivalent links in the west of the country are with Iran. In the north, although there has been less mass migration, there are strong cultural links with Tajik, Uzbek and Turkman populations in the Central Asian states. These links are deeper than simply "zones of influence", where the neighbours project themselves into Afghanistan. Influence runs the other way also. The Afghan populations in the east, south, west

and north of the country have over time established zones of influence for themselves beyond Afghanistan's borders and exploit economic and cultural opportunities in the areas where they have settled and with which they trade. The relationships with the regional powers have affected the local elites' choice of "second home" and their external patronage relationships. There is a propensity for elites along the Pakistan border to maintain residences in Pakistan and to be cultivated by the Pakistan authorities. Elites in the west enjoy an equivalent relationship with Iran and those in the north with the Central Asian states. These informal zones of influence and the continuing interest of the regional powers in political outcomes in Afghanistan introduce a regional dimension into the Afghan debate over decentralisation.

In considering whether the regional powers should be regarded as stakeholders in any moves towards Afghan decentralisation, it is important to recognise the way in which any such move would run directly counter to traditions of Afghan nationalism. One recurrent theme in Afghan nationalist discourse involves xenophobia and acute sensitivity over alleged infringements on sovereignty by external powers. Any attempt to gain official recognition of neighbours' zones of influence would trigger this sensitivity in a way that informal or covert links with the neighbours apparently do not.

The pattern of support to the warring factions in the latter stages of the pre-2001 conflict provides a stark example of what amounted to competitive zones of influence. A syndicate of Iran, India and Russia, working through Tajikistan, aided the Northern Alliance in its northern enclave, while Pakistan aided the Taliban, first in the south and then nationally. Indeed, it has been suggested (controversially) that the one of the Taliban's mistakes was to overreach themselves by straying beyond Pakistan's natural zone of influence and launching their campaigns in the north of the country. The Taliban only encountered serious opposition to their rule once they expanded beyond Kabul and entered non-Pashtun areas where Pakistan-based networks had far less influence than in the southern and eastern border provinces. The Taliban's severest reverse pre-2001, the massacre in Mazar in 1997, was a classic example of the price of this overreach, as the deal which had brought the Taliban into Mazar fell apart when challenged by a group beyond their influence. Meanwhile, in the post 2001 period, an example of the new approach to regional power influence is the Iranian success in concentrating assistance and economic links on Herat and the western region along its border.

One of the ideas for stabilising Afghanistan as western forces withdraw has been to restore and formalise these zones of influence, essentially allowing Pakistan and other concerned powers to take responsibility for the areas adjoining their borders. According to this scheme, if the neighbours were reassured that their clients would be appointed as provincial governors or security chiefs in the border provinces, this would offer the neighbours a powerful guarantee offsetting any supposed threat to their own security. In Pakistan's case it is assumed that it would use this influence to offset Indian influence being projected towards FATA and to prevent the use of Kandahar or Nimroz for support of the Baloch insurgency. Iran or the Central Asian states could use their influence for checking the rise of the Taliban or any other Sunni fundamentalist group or drug cartel which might threaten their security.

MICHAEL SEMPLE

Proposals by Afghan actors for decentralisation have little in common with the zone of influence scheme and are not intended to facilitate such a scheme. Indeed there are several reasons why any plans for formalising zones of influence as part of a grand strategy for Afghan stabilisation are impractical.

Local elites in all of Afghanistan's regions have a strong sense of being part of Afghan national politics. Formalising a role for neighbouring powers in administering Afghanistan would run directly counter to the tradition of Afghan nationalism and protection of sovereignty. Any political leader from one of Afghanistan's regions endorsing such a scheme would face such a backlash that he would probably forfeit his ability to engage in national politics. Therefore building political support within Afghanistan for the scheme would be impossible. Furthermore, any such scheme would run directly counter to one of the main thrusts of political reform in Afghanistan, which is towards democratisation and rendering public institutions and representatives accountable to the populations they serve. Afghan proponents of decentralisation have used the democratic case - that those charged with administering the provinces should answer to the people of those provinces. This spirit of democratic reform is incompatible with any notion of installing regional proxies to run the border provinces. Instead, the regional powers can be expected to continue a strategy of extending informal influence, along the lines of the Iranian practice in Herat and the west. As long as decentralisation takes place within the context of the unitary state, they can expect to have to underpin this by engaging with both the provincial and national authorities and without ever securing a formal zone of influence.

## 11. Conclusions & Recommendations

There is a compelling logic to the idea that decentralisation could contribute to stabilisation of Afghanistan.

It is an approach that has been used to good effect in other multi-ethnic societies. Afghanistan has well-defined provinces and natural regions which could, in principle, be used as the building blocks of a national scheme to accommodate the conflicting interest groups within decentralised structures, accountable to their local populations and even to ease the way to incorporating previously alienated groups into the political system. However, the mainstream Afghan debate on decentralisation includes only unambitious schemes for devolution of limited powers to sub-national administrative units. This debate stops well short of full federalist proposals, which are occasionally mentioned in the international literature divorced from any sense of what is politically possible in Afghanistan.

One of the reasons that the decentralisation agenda has been so limited in Afghanistan is that principles of centralism and the unitary state have been cornerstones of the country's constitutional history. Furthermore, in the realm of political rhetoric there is a long tradition of equating questioning of the unitary state to treason. However, underlying the sacrosanct status of centralisation and the unitary state is a complex set of political issues, including the practice of patronage, ethnic relations, access to natural resources and challenges of pluralism. Despite the sensitivities around decentralisation, the

government body charged with supervising local bodies has developed schemes for expanding roles of the different tiers of council. The main constitutional opposition has articulated a minimalist demand for key local officials to be elected. It thus focuses on democratising within existing sub-national boundaries, holding back from any proposal to revert to Afghanistan's historical provinces, which are larger and potentially more viable administrative units. The issue of Afghan decentralisation is relevant to the regional powers, because Pakistan, Iran and the Central Asian states all interact most intensively with adjoining parts of Afghanistan and the politics of these areas would be affected by any move towards decentralisation. However, just as there are political limits to what is possible in terms of viable decentralisation schemes, there would be likely to be significant resistance to any attempt to formalise relations between the regional powers and sub-national divisions.

Any proposal to decentralise power in Afghanistan, beyond the technocratic adjustments of roles and responsibilities contemplated by IDLG, would run against the grain of nearly a century of constitutional practice and the well-established political traditions of the largest ethnic group, the Pashtuns, who have historically favoured centralisation over decentralisation. International backing for any such scheme would be likely to render the opposition to it even more virulent. Therefore the international community should direct its efforts to helping Afghans reach a consensus on approaches to decentralisation rather than explicitly promoting any one of the schemes available.

As a reminder of the potential consequences of failing to build consensus, there is also a possibility of some form of decentralisation emerging as a default outcome in an acute crisis, rather than as a way of avoiding such a crisis. One such scenario would be if central government found itself in an impasse with local power-brokers and public sentiment in parts of the country. The central government could find itself unable to post its administrators in the provinces and districts, or find those administrators unable to function. The result of regions, whether north or south, withdrawing their consent from Kabul, would be a return to the days of *de facto* local powers, lacking constitutional sanction. This would be the least favourable decentralised outcome, marking the failure of efforts to restore constitutional government.

MICHAEL SEMPLE

# Afterword: Decentralisation & the Outcome of Political and Security Transitions

Afghanistan's political and security transitions in 2014, with the winding down of the ISAF mission and the installing of the National Unity Government, saw continuity in the organisation of administrative structures. The new government retained the well-established approach to centralisation of power. The position of provincial governor remained a key political appointment, signed off on by the President. One of the characteristics of the National Unity Government, which soon became apparent, was that the two teams forming the government engaged in intense politicking over all significant government appointments. The gubernatorial appointments and those to other provincial positions such as a police chief, were subsumed in a broader national level process, which was widely understood within Afghanistan as amounting to dividing spoils of office.

## Decentralisation in National Political Bargains

Despite the visible lack of movement towards implementing any of the schemes for decentralisation, the issue did feature on the national level political agenda at key points in the political process. Prior to the 2014 presidential election, the National Front (Jabha Milli) had functioned de facto as the principal political opposition. This grouping had included a scheme for decentralisation to provincial level in its political programme. There was a realignment of political alliances during the nomination process for the election, as each slate required three candidates (president and two vice presidents) and each slate in effect tried to construct a cross-ethnic alliance. The decisive move which established Ashraf Ghani's candidacy as viable was when he signed up General Dostam as first vice presidential candidate. Dostam had hitherto been a stalwart of the National Front. His team negotiated with Ghani a commitment to review administrative structures and the constitution, seek a consensus on a decentralisation scheme and move a constitutional amendment. Deliberately, the commitment was to a process rather than to a specific outcome, because the two teams understood that a prior commitment to devolving power from the centre could be a liability in Pashtun constituencies on which they depended for Ghani's personal vote.

The more famous political deal which came to symbolise the Afghan transition process was the deal between Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah, brokered by John Kerry in September 2014. This deal, to establish a National Unity Government (NUG) was focused on power at the centre, with no reference to centre-periphery relations. It provided for Dr. Abdullah to acknowledge Dr. Ghani as President in return for taking up a prime minister-like position as Chief Executive, and thus bringing his team into

the government. One outcome of this series of alliances was that the entire leadership of the now defunct National Front, ended up in senior positions in the NUG.

The NUG faced significant criticism in its first year and a half of operation for the agonisingly slow decision-making, especially around appointments. Although there were many factors at play, one of them was a key issue of political culture, which parallels the sensitivities around decentralisation noted in the main paper. There has been a protracted debate on whether the NUG deal was inherently a "power-sharing" agreement, with one side arguing that inclusion in a multi-ethnic polity requires power-sharing and the other side arguing that the viability of the state depends upon having an empowered president and that power-sharing is thus contrary to the character of the state.

In the event, despite the presence of so many erstwhile champions of decentralisation in the NUG, and the original agreement to seek a consensus on a specific scheme, the NUG made no progress towards decentralisation in its first year and a half. Both the Ghani-Dostam deal and the NUG deal had anticipated convening a tribal assembly empowered to amend the constitution. However, during the opening months of 2016 demands for such a Loya Jirga were taken up by supporters of the former president, who seemed more interested in bringing down the government than in amending the constitution. The slowness of the NUG to address the decentralisation agenda did not signify simply that its proponents had been co-opted into centralised power. Rather, the NUG was obliged to prioritise the pragmatic concerns of holding its administration together in the face of an escalating insurgency and the Karzai-linked attempts at destabilisation. An embattled administration stuck with the status quo in terms of administrative structures and put decentralisation on the back burner.

**Decentralisation & Informal Power**

While the old centralised formal structures of government received a new lease of life during 2015 and 2016, other informal developments during Afghanistan's transitions highlighted the particularities of the country's regions. Kabul remained the seat of formal power and focus for national politics. But there were significant differences in the way that security, politics and economics played out in the country's regions and provinces, suggesting a degree of informal decentralisation. The first evidence of political diversity came in the presidential elections. Voting patterns were not uniform across the country but rather differed between provinces and regions, largely reflecting underlying ethnic geography. Provisional results of the second round of the presidential elections indicated that from Afghanistan's thirty-four provinces, eighteen supported Ashraf Ghani and sixteen supported Dr. Abdullah. In twenty-four of the provinces, the margin of victory was more than thirty per cent,

MICHAEL SEMPLE

indicating a rather low level of integration of national politics. Similarly, differences in the patterns of insurgent violence were apparent across the provinces and regions. Interestingly the Taliban regionalised their approach to the insurgency, by dividing all their structures between two main zones – one zone consisting of provinces which were served from Quetta and the other zone of provinces served from Peshawar. The illegal economy introduced an element of decentralisation, as the state seemed increasingly unable or unwilling to assert its monopoly over natural resources. Much of the lapis lazuli trade in Badakhshan ended up controlled by a local militiaman and the Taliban, while control over opium revenues depended on control of territory and smuggling routes in Helmand and Kandahar and control of marble revenues depended on control of territory and routes in Herat and Helmand. While the political rhetoric of Kabul elites has continued to idealise the centralised, unitary state, the realities of an entrenched insurgency and power-brokers immersed in the illegal economy have driven a de facto decentralisation, ensuring that much economic activity happens beyond the writ of the state.

**Prospects**

In terms of the prospects for formal decentralisation, the experience of 2014-2016 can be summed up as "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose". In the short term, the ability of the national government to show sensitivity to the varying conditions and concerns of its provinces is probably more important than its ability to achieve progress on grand reform schemes. The main obstacle to progress towards formal decentralisation is the difficulty of fashioning a political strategy to build consensus. However the impasse on reform and decentralisation raises the prospect that movement will only be achieved as the unplanned outcome of a crisis, perhaps precipitated by insurgency gains.

**Michael Semple**
2016

## References

Rubin, B. and Malikyar, H. The Politics of Center-Periphery Relations in Afghanistan. New York:New York University, 2003.

Evans,Manning, et al. A Guide to Government in Afghanistan, Kabul. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit and the World Bank, 2004.

Canfield, R.L. "*Ethnic, Regional, and Sectarian Alignments in Afghanistan*", in A. Banuazizi and M. Weiner, eds. The State, Religion,and Ethnic Politics: Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1987, 76.

Nazif Shahrani, M. *"The future of the state and the structure of community governance in Afghanistan"*, in W. Maley, ed. Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban, New York: NYU Press, 1998, 218.

Van Bijlert, Martine. Between Discipline and Discretion, Policies Surrounding Senior Subnational Appointments, AREU, Kabul, 2009

Nixon, Hamish. Subnational State-Buildingin Afghanistan, AREU, Kabul, 2008

*Carroll, Bryan and Anderson, David A. "Afghanistan Governed by a Federal System with Autonomous Regions: A Path to Success?"* Small Wars Journal, 2009

Barfield,Thomas and Nojumi, Neamatollah.*"Bringing More Effective Governance to Afghanistan: 10 Pathways to Stability",* Middle East Policy, Vol. XVII, No. 4, Winter 2010

Blackwill, Robert. *"Plan B in Afghanistan",* Foreign Affairs, February 2011

# Abubakar Siddique

*Senior Correspondent covering Afghanistan and Pakistan for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL).*

## A Tapestry of Ethnicities

Afghanistan's national anthem recognizes 14 ethnic groups among the country's 27 million people: Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Balochis, Turkmens, Nooristanis, Pamiris, Arabs, Gujars, Brahuis, Qizilbash, Aimaq and Pashai.  Few groups are indigenous to Afghanistan; most of the larger ones have significantly greater populations in neighbouring countries.  Governing a viable state with these demographics has always been a core challenge.  Maintaining harmony among these groups is one of the biggest problems confronting Afghanistan today and a key determinant of whether its future is to be one of peace and reconciliation or conflict and discord.

The largest group, the Pashtuns, have many more members in neighbouring Pakistan. The Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens are much more numerous in the contiguous Central Asian countries to the north.[1] Nevertheless, as a people, Afghans do have a sense of nationhood despite their lack of a uniform national culture.  Their shared history together with the country's unique historical development clearly distinguishes the various ethnic groups living in Afghanistan from those in neighbouring countries.  But their ties also link Afghans with ethnic conflicts in neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan.

In the absence of accurate census data, determining the true percentages of various ethnic groups is problematic and can be contentious.  Furthermore, simply defining various ethnic identities is not always easy.  The idea that "ethnic groups are solid cultural units, which are divided by obvious boundaries" and have engaged in conflict for centuries is not applicable to Afghanistan.[2] For example, a sizeable number of Dari speakers consider themselves Pashtuns because of ethnic heritage.  Some native-Pashto speakers consider Dari their second language.  While the Nooristanis, Balochis, Pashai and Brahuis are distinct groups in the south and east of the country, they are identified more closely with the Pashtuns in Kabul because many of their members are bilingual.

*Abubakar Siddique has spent the past decade researching and writing about security, political, humanitarian and cultural issues in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Pashtun heartland along the border region where he was born.*

1. The tiny Kyrgyz minority in Afghanistan left the country during the 1980s. Few of its members have returned.
2. Schetter, Conrad, "*Ethnicity and the Political Reconstruction of Afghanistan,*" Center for Development Studies (ZEF) University of Bonn, Germany, Working Paper 3, 2004.

Bilingualism, intermarriages, religious and political ideologies transcend ethnic boundaries. At the same time, identities and group interests are very local, often associated with a political or regional unit—a village, clan or part of the country—rather than ethnic groups. Afghanistan is a patchwork of ethnicities much like colourful Afghan carpets, which makes it difficult to see its politics purely through an ethnic prism. It also makes territorial ethno-nationalism impractical. "Afghan ethnic groups have never viewed themselves as fixed nationalities with an overriding commonality and history that would require political unity or a nation-state," writes American anthropologist Thomas Barfield. "Instead, ethnicity in Afghanistan is essentially prenationalist, with ethnic groups holding similar economic and political interests but no common ideology or separatist aspirations."[3]

## An Uneven History of Ethnic Relations

Today's group relations and aspirations were shaped and greatly influenced during the emergence of modern Afghanistan during the reign of Amir Abdul Rahman (1880-1901). The Pashtuns lost their overwhelming majority at that time, because the Amir ceded the majority Pashtun population and their territories to British India, under the Durand Line treaty agreement of 1893.[4] But his consolidation of a centralised state, pacification of the Hazarajat and resettlement of the Pashtuns into ethnically mixed northern regions established Pashtun domination in Afghanistan.[5] Still, it was Dari–speakers, Tajiks and Qizilbash in particular, who practically ran the administration through domination of the bureaucracy. Their role was enhanced because the Pashtun kings adopted their language. The conflicts in Afghanistan were never exclusively ethnic throughout the twentieth century. They were more focused on alliance building by factions and powerbrokers. For example, the 1929 rebellion against the reformer King Amanullah Khan failed to deliver a stable replacement because of a split between the Pashtun and Tajik powerbrokers that instigated it.[6]

During the next half century, Afghanistan witnessed a stable, centralised, mostly Pashtun-dominated government, which relied on foreign assistance to bring about gradual modernisation. "Pashtunistan" — defined by some as an independent Pashtun state or autonomous region within Pakistan, but seen by others as a potentially unified state of all Pashtuns—became a key foreign policy issue for Afghanistan. This period saw concerted government efforts to grant rights to all citizens to establish more equality among them. The relative political freedoms granted under the 1964 Constitution allowed the formation of leftist and Islamist groups. At the same time, ethnicity played a more prominent role in political alignments. *Setam-e Milli* (National Oppression) emerged as a decidedly anti-Pashtun organisation whose focus was the overthrow of what they described as the Pashtun dominance of Afghanistan. On the other hand, *Afghan Millat*, a Pashtun nationalist political party, advocated greater Pashtunisation of Afghanistan and even aspired to unite all Pashtuns. Many leaders of the two major factions of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) also supported such views.[7]

The April 27 1978 communist military coup, called the Saur Revolution by its instigators, marked the end of Durrani dynasty and opened the

3. Barfield, Thomas, *"Afghanistan's Ethnic Puzzle,"* Foreign Affairs, September/October, 2011.
4. In fact, the British had acquired many Pashtun borderland districts, including most of today's FATA and parts of Balochistan, by forcing Amir Yaqub Khan to sign the Treaty of Gandamak in 1879 while their forces occupied Kabul.
5. Ahady, Anwar-ul-Haq, *"The Decline of the Pashtuns in Afghanistan,"* Asian Survey, Vol. 35, No. 7, pp. 621-634, July 1995.
6. Barfield, Ibid.
7. Shola Jawid, a radical leftist (Maoist) group has also been described as sharing *Setam-e Milli's* position on Pashtun domination. But some Afghans intellectuals point to the ethnic Pashtuns among their ranks as a proof of their commitment to Maoism.

political arena to all aspirants.[8] The Pashtun-dominated *Khalq* faction attempted to break down the dominance of Dari by focusing on language and cultural policy. The regime recognised Uzbeki, Turkmeni, Balochi and Nooristani as official languages and promoted Pashtun culture. But such policies were reversed to the advantage of non-Pashtun groups after the December 1979 Soviet invasion, which brought the *Parcham* faction into power. During the reign of *Parcham* leader Babrak Karmal, Dari was promoted at the expense of Pashto as his regime increased the non-Pashtun representation within the military and the bureaucracy.[9] Ethnicity also emerged as a factor of unity and division among the armed Islamist opposition to the regime. In Pakistan, Pashtun Islamists firmly controlled the resistance leadership while Iran supported the pre-dominantly Hazara Shi'a groups. In that atmosphere of internal fragmentation and external interference, President Najibullah's efforts at intra-Afghan reconciliation failed. Najibullah replaced Karmal in 1986 and had to face first the withdrawal of the Soviet army and then the collapse of the Soviet state. Western and regional apathy toward the country and fierce rivalries among the *mujahideen* and communist leaders ensured that the United Nations (UN) peace plan would collapse before taking off after Najibullah relinquished power in April 1992.

Najibullah's downfall heralded the beginning of a messy civil war and the complete dismantling of Afghan state institutions. An alliance of non-Pashtun *Parchami* officials with the Tajik leader Ahmad Shah Massoud ensured the demise of his regime, which was considerably weakened by the defection of Pashtun military officers after the Soviet army withdrew in early 1989. The Pashtuns lost influence and suffered perhaps the sharpest decline in their influence in this period. Still, the Afghan state's demise proved disastrous for all Afghan civilians irrespective of their ethnicity and political affiliation. The *mujahideen* regime was a mirage consisting of shifting alliances and conspiracies. While it claimed to be the protector of its members' various ethnicities, the leaders were amenable to external pressures and battlefield compulsions. Their struggle ultimately centred on individual survival and power grabs while often using ethnicity as a convenient cover and a powerful mobilising tool. Their main achievement until the emergence of the Taliban in late 1994 was to plunge Afghanistan deep into civil war and anarchy.

The *raison d'être* of the Taliban was to end the anarchy. But when they took on powerful non-Pashtun warlords and militias, some Afghan and international observers tended to describe them as "Pashtun nationalists" who wanted to revive a centralised Pashtun-dominated state in Afghanistan.[10] In fact, one of the first Taliban acts after capturing Kabul in September 1996 was to kill Najibullah and hang his corpse on public display. According to former Taliban official Waheed Mozhdah, the Taliban justified his killing - he was an ethnic Pashtun - as an act to please Allah and not a result of ethnic and tribal differences.[11] However, the Taliban failed to please any segment of Afghan society after capturing Kabul in September 1996. Their rigid policies never won them overwhelming public support among the Pashtuns. The Taliban were opposed to all Pashtun political elites in the regimes preceding them. They opposed the nationalist mainstream of the old royalist regime and, unlike the communists, had no worldly focus on material development as a means of radical progress. Many Pashtun *mujahideen* commanders fought against the Taliban for years. In fact,

8.  The Durrani dynasty really ended with the King's fall in 1973. But many Afghans consider President Daoud Khan as an extension of the dynasty because he was King Zahir Shah's first cousin and a political figure during his 40-year rule.

9.  Nabi, Eden, *"The Ethnic Factor in Soviet-Afghan relations,"* Asian Survey, March 1980, pp. 237-56.

10. While in power they never accepted the Durand Line and discouraged Pakistan from negotiating it. But they did not press the issue of Pashtunistan and remained concerned as Islamists with spreading their values and behavioural restrictions.

11. Mozhdah, Waheed, "Afghanistan under five years of the Taliban control" (In Dari, "Afghanistan Va Panj Sala Salta-e Taliban". Kabul, Maiwand Publications, 2001). I am grateful to the author for providing an unpublished English language translation.

ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE

many Kandahari *mujahideen* joined Herati Tajik (sometimes he is also identified as Farsiwan) warlord, Ismail Khan, to fight the Taliban. Senior Pashtun commanders from southern and eastern Afghanistan allied themselves with Ahmed Shah Massoud during the Taliban*'s* stint in power. Many Pashtun *mujahideen* commanders retained their status only by joining the Taliban. Although the majority of the Taliban came from the southern Pashtun tribal confederacies of the Ghilzai and the Durrani, engaging in traditional tribal politics remained anathema to them. Many Taliban networks were organised on the notion of *andewali* (Pashto for friendship) and some of these networks manifested tribal solidarity. While they were seen as adhering to *Pashtunwali* by outsider observers, the Taliban opposed important aspects of local *narkhs*, or customary law, in various Pashtun regions. Their central objectives, to which they strongly adhered, were to implement Islamic *Shari'a* law and bring their own vision of peace to Afghanistan.

## Ethnic Division and Unity since 2001

At the dawn of 21st century, the conflict in Afghanistan was seen above all as an ethnic struggle. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were seen as bankrolling a Pashtun takeover of the country by supporting the Taliban.[12] On the other hand, Iran, Russia, some Central Asian states and India supported the essentially non-Pashtun Northern Alliance,[13] to prevent a complete Taliban victory when the fundamentalist militia already controlled more than 90 per cent of Afghanistan's territory.[14] Peace-building efforts then centred on the creation of a representative administration. Most United Nations Security Council resolutions supported "the efforts of the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan to advance a peace process through political negotiations between the Afghan parties aimed at the establishment of a broad-based, multi-ethnic, and fully representative government." While the Taliban defied such resolutions, the Northern Alliance and Afghanistan's near and farther-off neighbours paid lip-service to them. In reality, all sides pushed for military advantage before committing to any political settlement. The factors that made ethnicity central to the discussion of that period were violent incidents and possible war crimes of "ethnic cleansing and ethnocide". These included violence in Kabul between 1992 and 1994; in the Shomali plains to its north between 1996 and 2001; in the Hazarajat between 1998 and 2001; and in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif in 1997 and 1998. Various warring factions perpetrated these crimes and the episodes include instances when the Hazaras, Tajiks or the Pashtuns were primary victims. Extremist networks from neighbouring countries were also involved.[15]

Afghanistan attracted unprecedented international attention after the September 11 2001 attacks in New York and Washington. A swift American–led military victory routed the Taliban and a much slower - and flawed - political intervention focused on delivering a "broad-based and multi-ethnic" government. Hamid Karzai, a Durrani Pashtun leader from Kandahar, was picked to lead the first transitional administration. The 30-member cabinet he led included 11 Pashtuns, 8 Tajiks, 5 Hazaras, 3 Uzbeks and 3 members of other ethnic minorities. The Taliban were then considered to be a spent force and were not even invited to the UN-brokered meeting in Bonn Germany, which delivered the interim

**12.** By 2000, the Saudi government likely had ended its support, though private sources of support continued.

**13.** Northern Alliance is the media's nomenclature for the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan. It was an alliance of Shi'a and Sunni *mujahideen* leaders and included ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, a few Pashtuns and some commanders from other ethnicities, dominated however by Ahmad Shah Massoud and Burhannudin Rabbani.

**14.** See, Saikal, Amin, *"Afghanistan's ethnic conflict,"* Survival, Volume 40, Issue 2, 1998.

**15.** Schetter, 2004, ibid.

administration and a roadmap for the country's political reconstruction. The key flaw in the arrangement was that it prioritised the resolution of the ethnicised Afghan conflict. In reality, that ethnicisation did not filter down to the masses. Most, if not all, Afghans simply wanted security, good governance, basic services and transitional justice. However, the provision of these fundamental demands was relegated to secondary significance.

Thus, the new political system propped up by Washington and its allies aimed to balance ethnic relations and prevent a renewed conflict by ostensibly attempting to make the new political system more representative, open and a level playing field for all Afghans. Some of the past discrimination against certain minorities was abandoned. However, the centralised system failed to deliver governance at sub-national level. Some of these critical shortcomings were papered over by more informal means, such as elite alliances and patronage politics, which serviced those in power but delivered little in the way of political stability and development. A big part comprised of deal-making, in which appointments to key posts amounted to a distribution of political spoils. This went against the demands of many Afghans, who called for a meritocracy and for transparency.

Thus, the international intervention in fact enhanced the role of patronage politics in Afghanistan, contrary to popular Afghan expectations. By supporting the civil war era militia commanders as key power brokers, the Western intervention contributed much to strengthening the networks they ran in the name of certain ethnic and sectarian groups. In the emerging Afghan political order, ethnic politics were not defined by ethnic political parties with ethnic programs (as is the case in neighbouring Pakistan) but rather, by fluid patronage networks led by power brokers. They used ethnic, sectarian, and sub-ethnic ties to build networks, using resources obtained from a variety of sources. Some of them, for instance, did not abandon their relations with external patrons such as Tehran and Islamabad despite publicly pledging loyalty to the new political order. Such ethnic patronage networks have been critically strengthened over the period since 2001, by the distribution of contracts by Washington and its allies among influential power brokers. That in turn affected the formation of ethnic coalitions and relations among them. Elections provided an especially large opportunity for patronage politics to prosper, by enabling certain networks to assume a larger political role. Overall, patronage politics affected the formation of a political system whose formal structures coexist uneasily with the informal power structures of patronage.[16]

## Pakistan and the Pashtun Paradox

Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been clouded by the division of the Pashtun population between the two countries. Today, nearly 50 million Pashtuns count the two countries as home. There are some 15 million Pashtuns in Afghanistan, while an additional 30 million to 35 million Pashtuns live in Pakistan. No Afghan government has ever formally recognised the Durand Line as a *de jure* international border. To leaders in Islamabad, nationalist Pashtuns and Balochis represented the most significant threat to Pakistan's national unity since the creation

ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE

of Bangladesh in 1971. That view was further reinforced by the majority status of Pashtuns in neighbouring Afghanistan, where rulers championed the rights of Pashtuns in Pakistan and made irredentist claims of their own. Ever since the 1970s, Pakistan has responded to the threat by propping up armed Islamist clients in Afghanistan. Most of those clients were ethnic Pashtuns, so the policy addressed both internal and external political and security concerns.

Western backing in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s provided Pakistan with a golden opportunity to act on its longstanding desire to weaken Pashtun nationalism. It actively supported pan-Islamism among Afghan refugees while bankrolling Islamist parties in the border region. That resulted in a newer brand of "Pashtun Islamism", some of whose characteristics were manifested and reinforced during the Taliban's ascent to power in Afghanistan, where pan-Islamist solidarity surpassed tribalism and ethnic cohesion.[17]

Pakistani analysts, often taking a pro-Pakistani-military world-view, saw the Taliban as a strategic asset. In that view, the Taliban consisted of militant Sunni extremists, composed mainly of southern Afghan Pashtuns primarily loyal to, or beneficial to, Pakistan's geo-strategic interests. They were viewed both as Pakistani proxies opposing the influence of Pakistan's near and further off neighbours; and as an Islamist bulwark against Afghan nationalism and secular Pashtun ethno-nationalism within Pakistan. In addition to fighting against the pro-India, pro-Russia and pro-Iran Northern Alliance, the Taliban also opposed all moderate and progressive Pashtun groups and political leaders in Afghanistan. Extremist groups in Pakistan later emulated their intolerance for dissent among Pashtuns.

The aftermath of 9/11 did not change the Pakistani security calculus. Despite being allies of the West, Pakistani leaders openly advocated a return of the Taliban and equated them with the real representatives of the Pashtuns in Afghanistan. Pakistani leaders, particularly former military dictator General Pervez Musharraf, championed Pashtun rights in Afghanistan while remaining seemingly oblivious to an expanding Taliban and Al-Qaeda insurgency in its western Pashtun regions. Islamabad gained little from what its critics dubbed as a double game. Its interference in domestic Afghan affairs made it extremely unpopular among many segments of Afghan society. Particularly damaging was the loss of Pashtun and non-Pashtun powerbrokers, who viewed Islamabad as an unreliable patron.

Pakistani support for the extremists in Afghanistan has had a significant domestic blowback. It bitterly divided the country's Pashtun population. The Taliban rule in Afghanistan in the 1990s offered sanctuaries and combat experience to Pakistani Sunni extremists. It also energised the various factions of the *Jamiat Ulam-e Islam* (JUI). But the Taliban insurgency deeply affected them by threatening the leadership of key Pashtun Islamist leaders. The Taliban regime and later the extremist insurgencies in the tribal areas were universally opposed by secular Pashtun ethno-nationalists in Pakistan, because of their political competition with the Islamists for popular votes. For them, the Taliban represented the climax of the Pakistani military's imperial over-reach. Such views were finally adopted by Western leaders as they stared at a

17. For a detailed discussion see, Rubin, Barnett and Siddique, Abubakar, "Resolving the Pakistan-Afghanistan Stalemate", Special Report 176, United States Institute of Peace, October 2006.

potential strategic debacle in Afghanistan. "In supporting these [militant] groups, the government of Pakistan, particularly the Pakistani Army, continues to jeopardise Pakistan's opportunity to be a respected and prosperous nation with genuine regional and international influence," top American military officer Michael Mullen told the Senate's Armed Services Committee on September 22, 2011. His views echoed what secular Pakistani and Afghan leaders have been saying for years. The Pashtun dynamic is expected to remain a key determinant of cooperation or competition between the two countries in the future.

## The Many Wars of Balochistan

The nearly half-million Balochis and Brahuis in Afghanistan do not constitute a threat in terms of a potential major ethnic conflict in the country. Many of them speak Pashto and follow Sunni Hanafi Islam, which integrates them well into the Afghan social fabric. Afghanistan has historically supported Balochi separatist nationalists in Pakistan as part of its Pashtunistan demands. In the 1970s, Afghanistan backed a Balochi insurrection and later sheltered the insurgents. The south-western province of Balochistan makes up nearly half of Pakistan's 800,000-square-kilometre territory, its population (nearly half of whom are Pashtun) accounts for less than 5 percent of the country's 180 million people. Balochi separatist factions headed by young leaders are now perpetuating their fifth rebellion in Pakistan's 64-year history. Islamabad crushed earlier insurgencies in 1948, 1958, 1962, and from 1973 to 1977.

Kabul partly revived its traditional support for the Balochis, as the new administration faced greater military pressure from a regrouped Taliban. Afghanistan accused Pakistan of harbouring remnants of the former Taliban regime in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province. Alleged Afghan support for the on-going Balochi insurgency in Pakistan and continued Taliban sanctuary in the region constitute another issue of discord between Islamabad and Kabul. Balochistan's long Arabian Sea shore, its borders with Afghanistan, Iran and all of Pakistan's provinces make it a regional crossroads. The region may, in the future, benefit from planned energy running pipelines across Iran, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. But for the time being it serves as a hotbed of regional rivalries and insurgent movements.

Today, Islamabad is still vigorously fighting its Balochi insurgency, occasionally diverting resources it gets from the West to confront the Afghan Taliban and Al-Qaeda. But the West still considers ending the Taliban's Pakistan sanctuaries as a top priority for salvaging their transition plans and forcing Afghan insurgents to the negotiating table. That also creates further friction in the already deteriorating relations between Islamabad and Washington. Furthermore, according to information from some Balochi activists, in their belief, one reason for the increased efforts to crush the newest insurgency in the province is so that the Afghan Taliban's sanctuaries there remain protected. Islamabad, on the other hand, has publicly accused India of supporting Balochi separatists. Islamabad has also accused Kabul of sheltering Balochi rebel leader Brahamdagh Khan Bugti for years. The unending attacks on Pakistan's tiny Hazara minority in the province are adding

tension to relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan because the bond between the Hazaras of the two countries has been strengthened by displaced Afghan Hazara who lived in exile in Quetta.

## Spoiler, Friend or Adversary – Iran's Many Facets in Afghan Divides

Many Afghan and Iranian ethnic groups belong to what regional specialists call "the Iranian peoples", because of their ethnic and linguistic links.  In modern times, Iran's influence in Afghanistan has been helped by the Farsi language.  Dari, a dialect of Iran's national language Farsi, is Afghanistan's lingua franca.  Since the Iranian revolution, the clerical regime has added Shi'a Islam as an instrument to further their influence in Afghanistan.  Iran hosted eight Shi'a Hazara organisations compared to the seven Sunni *mujahideen* organisations in Pakistan.  Tehran pressured them to forge unity in 1989 and become a single political party.  By and large, the Iranian support for Shi'as did not serve them well, because it pitted them against the majority Sunnis, a stance  which on occasion turned them into targets for Sunni hardliners.  Indeed, Tehran developed hostilities with the Taliban soon after the emergence of fundamentalist Taliban militia in mid-1990s.

Tehran immensely benefited from the overthrow of the extremist Sunni Taliban regime in Afghanistan after 9/11.  However, it views the presence of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) troops as a major threat in Afghanistan.  Afghan and NATO officials periodically accuse Iran of supporting the Taliban. Tehran, in their view, wants to keep the pot boiling in Afghanistan by providing arms to the insurgents.  On the other hand, Tehran has held cordial relations with the various administrations President Hamid Karzai headed during the past decade.  However, Tehran played the language card by supporting some Sunni Persian speakers.  Some Afghan intellectuals have been alarmed by what they see as a cultural invasion of their country, as Tehran bankrolls Afghan media (some of which exclusively focuses on promoting Shi'ism) and floods the country with Persian-language literature.  The increasing Iranian involvement in Afghanistan does not elevate a single ethnic group, but rather, simply pursues Tehran's strategic interests.  Like Islamabad, Iran is also watching the emerging scenario in the lead up to the 2014 NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan.  It is likely to build on its influence in Afghanistan to position itself as a major spoiler after 2014.

## Reviving the Lost Connections to Central Asia

Unlike Iran and Pakistan, Afghanistan's relations with its three Central Asia neighbours, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, have not seriously affected group relations inside Afghanistan.  The Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens in Soviet Central Asia had little contact with their ethnic cousins in Afghanistan before the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1980s.  The two groups are still distinct because of their experience with different state systems.  Islam emerged as an alternative to the authoritarian post-Soviet regimes in Central Asia.  Some Afghan Islamists were involved in the Tajik civil war in the 1990s.  The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was inspired and supported by the

Afghan Taliban. Both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have provided limited support to some Afghan groups, particularly Northern Alliance factions during the civil war with the Taliban. Turkmenistan has stuck to its declared neutrality in Afghan affairs since its independence. Overall, the strategy of the post-Soviet Central Asian states has been to not support either secession or ethno-nationalism in Afghanistan. The Central Asians have focused on cultivating ethnic friends across their borders, as an insurance against the emergence of hostile groups in Afghanistan.

All Central Asian states are now exposed to a gathering threat of extremist revolts inspired and supported by the IMU and affiliated groups, which have been transformed by their alliance with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Beginning in 2010, the IMU attempted to make a comeback in Central Asia on the back of its symbiotic relationship with the Taliban. The IMU's Sunni Muslim ranks of Central Asian origin made it appealing to ethnic Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Turkmen, as well as other non-Pashtun communities. With the Taliban's help, the IMU carved small sanctuaries in remote regions along Afghanistan's northern border. That enabled it to train fresh recruits and strike targets in neighbouring Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Tajikistan suffered major attacks in 2010. The trend continued in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in 2011. In the absence of domestic reforms, economic development and regional cooperation, the threat of Islamist revolts is likely to increase across Central Asia.

## Afghanistan a Bridge or Barrier to Cooperation and Development?

Afghanistan's immediate future is clouded by unease over the aftermath of NATO's departure in 2014.

The Taliban and NATO are still pushing for a decisive battlefield advantage. The West has failed to deliver a major diplomatic breakthrough in the form of pushing Afghanistan's predatory neighbours to cooperate. Afghan institutions are still too fragile, dwarfed by powerful figures controlling patronage networks. Creating too many security structures, like the loosely controlled community police, may ultimately prove disastrous. The reconciliation process, a key to the future peace in Afghanistan, has been severely setback by violence and faces an uncertain future. That confuses many Afghan power brokers. There are already reports of some commanders in northern Afghanistan arming their supporters. The merciless Ashura attacks against mostly Hazara Shi'a mourners in December 2011, presumably instigated from Pakistan, could spark the revival of sectarian conflict. A rerun of the proxy war of the 1990s is, however, the preferred framework for outside intervention in the Afghan conflict. The Afghan sides involved in such a conflict could potentially be defined along ethnic lines.

Kabul can adopt a range of policies to thwart such scenarios. President Karzai and his successors should move beyond the deal-making model and implement genuine reform. He has attracted unprecedented international support in Afghan history and he must use it for developing his country. His administration should abandon patronage politics for a meritocracy. It should not be limited to Kabul, but needs to filter down

to the provinces and districts. Such measures will be welcomed by an Afghan population victimised by all forms of corruption. Afghanistan needs to deliver a more pragmatic and flexible form of local governance. The country's current centralised constitution envisioned elected district *shuras*, or councils, which never materialised. Kabul should invest more in preserving Afghanistan's diverse cultural heritage and promote various ethnic cultures. The development of regional languages is closely related. Following the example of South Asia, Afghanistan can gradually adopt English as an official language. That is already the case in Afghan offices and businesses, thanks to the on-going international engagement in the country. It will be critical to putting an end to the rivalry between Pashto and Dari, and would do much to modernise Afghan education.

However, the key to a peaceful Afghan future is strengthening regional cooperation between Kabul and its neighbours. Future relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan can benefit from a recognised open border. It should couple with rapid economic development and political reform. That would extract the Pashtuns from a seemingly unending conflict and enable them to communicate, trade, and develop both their economy and their culture while permanently settling the question of their citizenship rights in both countries. Islamabad and Kabul can use their Pashtun (and to a lesser extent Balochi, Hazara and Nooristani) population in mutual confidence building. The people-to-people contacts, supported by the international community, would help regional cooperation. Such a process could be replicated with Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbours and Iran. However, the international community should pay greater attention to the perennial problem of regional interferences in Afghanistan. A greater international focus on, and support for, promoting people-to-people contact, dialogue and trade will force reluctant regional governments to look towards cooperation as the key plank of their geo-strategic calculations. That would do much to dissuade them from supporting armed proxies inside Afghanistan in order to achieve what they think is necessary for securing their national interests.

# Afterword

Afghanistan has largely avoided the doomsday scenario predicted by many in the West before the end of NATO's combat mission there in 2014, entailing the withdrawal of most alliance troops. Millions of Afghans braved threats to vote in the two rounds of controversial presidential elections that year, but they were rewarded with a somewhat dysfunctional and diarchal national unity government. Although the government manages to accommodate most of Afghanistan's strongmen and factions, it is united in name only. Since assuming office, it has been divided over policies and bargained hard over key appointments while facing rising insecurity nationwide and an economic downturn.

The government faces a major test this year as it scrambles to hold parliamentary elections and an important Loya Jirga. The grand tribal assembly is expected to amend the constitution to create the post of an executive prime minister, and politicking in the lead-up to the Loya Jirga is at risk of becoming an ethnic competition.

The Taliban's push for a battlefield advantage and their aversion to talks further test Afghan national unity. Luckily, the Taliban are no longer viewed as disgruntled Pashtuns inside and outside Afghanistan. But in the absence of a negotiated solution and their victories in southern and eastern Afghan provinces, the country could move toward a de facto partition -- with the Taliban controlling the south and their former enemies in the now defunct Northern Alliance reclaiming their northern strongholds.

Pakistan's continued covert assistance to the Afghan insurgents has so far thwarted Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's efforts to end his country's war through regional consensus. While Afghanistan's other neighbors are not helping either, growing Chinese interest and that country's role in Afghanistan is a silver lining of Afghanistan's darkly clouded future. Beijing's ambitions to revive the economies of its neighboring countries by connecting them to the 21st-century version of the Silk Road trade route and its efforts to curb separatism and Islamist radicalism in its Muslim-populated western Xinjiang region raise hopes for peace and stability in Afghanistan. Beijing is unlikely to allow Afghanistan's reversal into a safe haven for radical Islamists.

**Abubakar Siddique**
2016

# THE CHANGING NATURE OF POWER AND SOVEREIGNTY IN AFGHANISTAN

**Aziz Hakimi**

*School of Oriental & African Studies, London*

## 1. Introduction

Domestic and global anxiety about the fate of Afghanistan and the West's decade-long military, diplomatic and economic engagement in the region has intensified as United States (US) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) troops prepare to disengage from the conflict. The change is reflected in Western policy's turn to realism - exemplified by demands to abandon nation building abroad and recognise the limits of Western power - and instead work through and with local allies, as has been attempted by Western counter-insurgency (Stewart 2009).

Western intervention is generally criticised on the basis of the assertion that Afghanistan is ill-suited to Western liberal models. Instead, a clear re-orientation is evident in both policy and academic circles towards the 'local' and the 'traditional' and in favour of hybrid political orders over the 'Westphalian state' (Boege, et al. 2009). Ironically, conservative politicians and critical theorists have come to agree on the same thing: liberal peace-building approaches had not necessarily led to peace in zones of conflict. However, the implication of this new understanding has not necessarily led to the questioning of key liberal assumptions underpinning Western forays into zones of instability. Instead, the failure of liberal ideas and institutions taking roots in the violent parts of the non-Western world has been, mistakenly, attributed to too much liberalism operating in Western projects of intervention; an inherent illiberalism on the part of non-Western societies; and their resistance to adopting Western norms and values over their own traditional practices (Chandler 2010).

Meanwhile, escalating violence has led to calls for a strategy of less counter-insurgency and more killing and capturing, using Special Operations Forces (SOFs), drones and local proxy forces (Kaplan 2010). The recent US-Afghanistan strategic partnership agreement aims to pursue a combination of institutional building, albeit on a more modest scale and continuing kill/capture operations to contain the insurgency. Expectations of Western exit are also hinged on a peace deal with elements of the insurgency. A better trained and equipped Afghan

security force, including local militias, coupled with modest amounts of continued Western aid, is expected to keep the current oligarchy in power against an armed insurgency allegedly supported by Pakistan's military establishment. However, the regional dimension of the conflict is tied to domestic politics of the states in the region, whereby '*state-building in one country, for instance Pakistan, may derive benefits from violence, economic interest and state disarray in another, for example Afghanistan*' (Cramer and Goodhand 2002, 886). This makes for an unstable region and the continuation of violent politics in both countries.

Afghan political elites believe that Pakistan will continue its policy of destabilising Afghanistan until a pro-Pakistan Afghan government is installed in Kabul. Cross-border support to the Taliban insurgency is considered a key element of Pakistan's strategic calculation to achieve this aim. The Pakistan army's two-faced policy of military crackdown against Pakistani Taliban in the tribal areas, combined with its refusal to act against the Afghan Taliban operating inside those same areas, is seen as further proof of Pakistani complicity in instability inside Afghanistan, aimed at achieving its long-standing policy objective of strategic depth. Despite internal opposition, especially in the country's liberal media, to Pakistan's foreign policy objectives in Afghanistan, the military establishment in Pakistan has not shown any indication of changing its existing mindset about Afghanistan and the region. Providing support to *jihadi* groups in India and Afghanistan not only achieves a certain foreign policy objective, but is also closely linked to the role of the military in domestic politics and Pakistan's state-building project. The Pakistani military has relied on political alliances with domestic Islamist parties in order to weaken secular political parties and civilian governments inside Pakistan - an outcome that guarantees the military's supremacy in domestic politics. The Islamist parties in Pakistan maintain strong links with the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Kashmiri *jihadi* groups in India. The '*mujahideen*' in Kashmir have waged an armed struggle against the Indian state since the late 1980s to free Kashmir from India's domination.

Afghan politicians have harboured equally hostile views towards Pakistan over the issue of the Durand Line, which Afghanistan has not yet recognised. In private, a number of senior politicians have justified the presence of foreign troops and Western aid to the state-building project and regard support to the country's police and army as a means to strengthen Afghanistan's position in a future conflict with Pakistan. There are strong residues of irredentist claims within conservative and nationalistic political circles in Afghanistan.[1] The persistence of this kind of political discourse makes it difficult for a more enlightened policy to emerge, that could prepare the way for the recognition of the Durand Line by Afghanistan as a means of resolving existing tensions between the two countries and normalising political and economic relations.

This paper aims to explain the broader contours of the emerging fields of political power in contemporary Afghanistan and its implications for regional politics. It is inspired by the assertion that much of the Western scholarship of Afghanistan is 'theoretically barren'; mostly shaped by Western geostrategic self-interest; and '*its deficiencies are reflections of the overall poverty of this scholarship*' (J. M. Hanifi 2011, 268).

**1.** An irredentist is one who advocates the recovery of territory culturally or historically related to one's nation but now subject to a foreign government.

This assertion is mainly due to the tendency in much of this literature to rely on out-dated and flawed theoretical frameworks and under-theorising of knowledge. The implication is, that notwithstanding a few exceptions, a large corpus of academic and other knowledge production endeavours in relation to Afghanistan has not only become highly politicised in the last decade, but has also fundamentally become an exercise in which '*the blind lead the blind*' (J.M. Hanifi 2011, 269).

The first part of the paper provides a brief historical overview of Western interventions into and involvement with Afghanistan and the kind of political repertoires and outcomes they produced and ended up validating.

It first traces the origin of the 'tribal' and 'stateless' notions of Afghanistan; how and why they came about; and the reasons why such notions continue to hold so much potency. There has been a tendency, from colonial times onwards to consider the 'state' and 'tribe' as insular and separate orders, and more or less constantly engaged in internal struggles. A more critical literature has challenged this singular view of the state and tribe by offering a more subjective and multi-dimensional view of power and political authority (e.g. Moore 1993; Lund 2006; Bertelsen 2009).

It then engages with a discussion of counter-insurgency and the work of 'soldier-scholars' and anthropologists in order to explore the current interest of the Western military in the 'local' and the 'traditional', and reveals the contours of engagement with tribal leaders and local shuras, through a brief discussion of the Afghan Local Police programme. It provides a critical perspective on the tribes and *shuras* and how they have been used instrumentally for military objectives as part of counter-insurgency. The paper briefly engages with a more critical literature to demonstrate the limits of some of the concepts previously discussed, including the tribe and its apparently enduring character and the state as a social actor. It also highlights the massive social transformation that has taken place in Afghanistan in the last four decades; the consequence of these changes for our understanding of contemporary power dynamics at the local and national level; and their regional implications.

The last section is a case study of local power dynamics in the border province of Nangarhar. It aims to demonstrate how actual power relations in the province operate and why it is not possible to reduce these complex dynamics to either the state or tribal logic. The case study shows that the notion that Afghanistan is working according to a tribal logic is in fact difficult to sustain empirically. It demonstrates that the reality of violent politics in which commanders and warlords enjoy a privileged position by virtue of their arms and money, hardly affords a constructive role for traditional leaders and institutions. The case study concludes that the situation described by Jon W. Anderson in the late 1970s and later on validated by subsequent scholarship starting in the 1990s (Rubin 1995) and well into our present time (Dorronsoro 2005; Giustozzi 2009) that '*there are no khans anymore*' continues to hold true in the case of Nangarhar. Tribal leaders like *khans* and *maliks* have been replaced by commanders, warlords and insurgent leaders, as well as militant mullahs, making escape from 'armed politics' a long term challenge for Afghanistan (Giustozzi 2011). The same can be said about Pakistan's tribal areas.

The case study also highlights the need for rethinking some key theoretical assumptions. It shows that the earlier colonial imageries of Afghanistan and the current claims that Afghanistan is tribal and stateless upon which Western models should not be imposed is a product of both a particular historical reading by some scholars and also speaks to the specific needs of outside powers, who find themselves mired in the messy reality of military occupation and local resistance.

## 2. Historical Context

### The Thirst for Knowledge & Conflicting Narratives

With a history going back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, Western interests in obtaining knowledge about Afghanistan, and ways to make it 'legible' (and therefore more governable) have remained steady throughout the first decade of the twenty first century. The thirst for context specific knowledge has, however, increased as Western intervention deepened in the second half of the decade. Although there is a long-standing colonial history which has promoted a certain view of Afghanistan as being tribal and stateless, it is important to note that specific histories of Western intervention have led to the generation of particular imageries of the country, which - given official sanction - has rendered them partly hegemonic and a possible basis for future reference. Historically, this trend has privileged a tribal, stateless and Pashtun imagery of Afghanistan (Mousavi 1998; B. D. Hopkins 2008). More pointedly, Afghanistan is described either as a 'stateless space', a place of pure anarchy and chaos inhabited by independent tribes and conservative Islam, or alternately a 'para-colonial state' (a state created but not occupied by colonial order) ruled according to timeless native traditions (B. D. Hopkins 2008). This essentially unstable political order is held together by 'balanced opposition' among the competing orders, whereby the state is one among many social formations and sources of authority but not necessarily the dominant Weberian form (Kilcullen 2009).

However, there have been variations and inconsistencies in what are often considered hegemonic texts.[2] For example, when it suited imperial-colonial policy, the Pashtun tribes are celebrated as natural allies and the rightful rulers of Afghanistan. However, at other times, the same tribesmen are described as savage and violent people living in a place of anarchy and disorder (Lindholm 1980). In the aftermath of the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842) and the failure of the British to directly control Afghanistan, the British colonial regime in India tried to justify its isolationist policy towards Afghanistan by treating the Pashtun tribes as marginal and violent people inhabiting a marginal and harsh land best left to their own devices (B. D. Hopkins 2008). It therefore follows that the production of cultural knowledge has been closely aligned with Western strategic objectives and its complex history of intervention. It also points to the interplay between expert knowledge and Western imperial policy. The autonomy ascribed by the British to the frontier tribes in the nineteenth century, for example, can be understood in relation to British imperial objectives to secure a frontier zone of stability between India and Afghanistan. This required wresting

2. For a critical review of Thomas Barfield's acclaimed book: Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History (2010) see (J. M. Hanifi 2011).

the control of these areas from the Afghans, by asserting that the tribes in today's FATA had been independent and outside the sovereign authority of the Afghan monarch. The implication of this argument was clear: it effectively questioned the political authority and jurisdiction of the Afghan ruler over these areas and at the same time justified British imperial policy of indirect rule along the frontier (Haroon 2007). Later on, when the British colonial regime in India intensified its relations with its client Amir Abdul Rahman Khan, the Durrani ruler of Afghanistan from 1880-1901, the colonial authorities - as well as the Anglo-Durrani state - privileged a Durrani and Kabul-centric view of Afghanistan, wherein the tribes were increasingly fitted into the world view of the emerging Afghan nation-state (S. M. Hanifi 2011).

During the Cold War, US-Soviet rivalries lent themselves to Western support to Afghan Islamists and *mujahideen* commanders. Such efforts proved instrumental in the rise of the 'neo-khans' and conflict entrepreneurs who wield power in contemporary Afghanistan.

As more territory was wrested away from government control and fell into the hands of the *mujahideen*, the number of 'liberated areas' multiplied where new regimes of authority emerged by working with non-state armed actors. Factional fighting among the *mujahideen* groups and the loss of legitimacy and political credibility that these struggles entailed prompted both Western governments and aid workers to link up instead with local communities and tribal leaders, both to ease the implementation of their aid projects, as well as to legitimise their interventions, at a time when public authority had been fragmented and contests over political authority had escalated into violent conflicts. It was during this period that Western governments and aid workers intensified their interaction with local communities and tribal leaders. As a result, the *shuras* as institutions of local governance took on an added political significance (Carter and Connor 1989). These specific engagements ended up partly reinforcing both the celebrated tradition of the resistance of rural villagers against the central government and the image of Afghanistan as the land of *shuras* and self-ruled communities. With the US intervention in late 2001 and the initial commitment to nation building, the discursive field changed once again and the emphasis shifted to building a centralised state in order to overcome the legacy of the last three decades. Legitimacy for the new regime was provided by invoking the tradition of the *jirga* to validate the post-Taliban political dispensation. 'Piggybacking' on existing notions of authority is a powerful tool to legitimate new orders, and the *loya jirga* became the ideal instrument for the validation of authority in 2002.

**The Implications of the Doctrine of Counter-insurgency**

However, by the end of the decade, as the task of building a centralised state proved increasingly difficult and the insurgency gained more strength to challenge the authority of the Afghan government, the US military's counter-insurgency doctrine emphasised the importance of local governance and working with traditional leaders and institutions (Ledwidge 2009; Kilcullen 2009). The emphasis consequently shifted from the national to the local and from national politicians and institutions to local leaders, *jirgas* and *shuras*. However, at present, as the US-led NATO alliance prepares to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan, such

AZIZ HAKIMI

259

transformative efforts at the local level are proving increasingly difficult to fit into the grid of Western strategic considerations. Population-centric counter-insurgency and its lofty goals of correcting the underlying causes of conflict, removing poverty and supporting political and economic developments are being eclipsed by a renewed focus on counterterrorism and killing and capturing the enemy. A clear reorientation in Western policy is also observable in the shift in the discourse by making appeals to the grain of Afghan culture and 'leaving Afghanistan to the Afghans' (Rodriguez 2011). This evolving perspective highlights the importance of attending to context, history and the political struggles and outcomes as a way of explaining Western intervention and the kind of world views it ends up authorising and validating. Paradoxically, as security deteriorated, a bunker mentality emerged and international aid actors increasingly retreated 'behind the wire' (Duffield 2010). Yet the demand for knowledge to map, understand and validate the many emerging fields of power has become amplified, in the quest to govern the unruly borderlands of Afghanistan. One implication of this is a growing reliance on knowledge-brokers and translators who can live and work 'beyond the wire' - Afghan research organisations, local informants and foreign academics who have 'gone native' and do not live in fortified compounds. However, the problem with this approach is that while these assemblages of expertise seek to make visible the 'traditional' and the 'informal', they also render the underlying interests and hegemonic power relations invisible.

## The "Rush to the Intimate":[3] the Knowledge Production Assemblage

### Culture as a Weapon

The effort to 'know' Afghanistan has involved writings by journalists, diplomats, academics, 'soldier-scholars', the military and NGOs.[4] This assembly of actors and institutions have argued that, since the US administration lacked proper understanding of Afghanistan and the insurgency, they themselves could play a useful role in the counter-insurgency efforts by supplying knowledge (validated by research) to the US military and other NATO forces. Thomas Barfield, the American anthropologist who is considered one of America's foremost authorities on Afghanistan, has publicly articulated the need for Western governments to consult academics in order to improve the counter-insurgency effort in Afghanistan (Horton 2010). He is a keen advocate of a counter-insurgency strategy that is based '*on a careful study of social relationships prepared by professional anthropologists with direct experience in Afghanistan*' (Horton 2010). David Edwards argues that the Human Terrain System (HTS) was designed to '*bring the insights of academic anthropology to the practice of military counter-insurgency*' (Edwards 2010, 1). The American military, he argues, has not been able to defeat the Afghan insurgency because it lacked knowledge of the social context in which troops were fighting. The HTS provided the military the kind of cultural knowledge they would need to carry out counter-insurgency operations, and in his view, this somehow justified the use of anthropology in the service of counter-insurgency. These overtures to and by academics have established a curious relationship

**3.** I borrow this term from Derek Gregory (Gregory 2008).

**4.** In the context of Afghanistan, NGOs and contractors, including local ones, who present themselves as 'research organisations' able to operate beyond the 'wire' are important contributors to satisfying the thirst for knowledge in and about Afghanistan. They are funded by Western donor agencies and diplomatic missions to conduct 'commissioned research'. They often do not publish their research findings.

between academic anthropology and military counter-insurgency (McFate 2005). However, the use of 'culture as a weapons system' has drawn criticism from leading anthropologists objecting to anthropology's instrumental use for military objectives (Gusterson 2007).

## Perspectives on Statehood

A prominent theme that runs through some of the counter-insurgency literature constructs Afghanistan as a stateless, tribal society opposed to the modern state.

A prime example of this trend is David Kilcullen's book *Accidental Guerrilla* (Kilcullen 2009). Kilcullen relies on anthropological concepts to describe a pre-modern, tribal Afghanistan ruled by a triad form of governance - tribe, state and Islam. According to this model, which builds on David Edwards' thesis of '*moral fault lines*' (Edwards 2002), the historic moral logic of opposition between the triad powers is the constitutive element of political authority and this system is kept together and stable by maintaining a 'balanced opposition' between the three competing forces. In this view, conflict and political instability result from attempts by one of the elements to expand power at the expense of the other elements. Kilcullen argues that the West's pursuit of terrorists as part of the 'war on terror' has brought Western military institutions face to face with these pre-modern societies, and by relying on counter-insurgency and cultural knowledge, Western military institutions themselves have, after the initial debacle in Iraq, acquired the cultural sophistication and the military technology to pacify and manage them. Kilcullen argues for a strategy that emphasises local solutions to local problems and working with and through local tribal allies, such as the US military's effort of arming Sunni militias against Al Qaeda in Iraq and using tribal militias, called *arbaki* in Afghanistan. The arming of Sunni militias, the surge of American troops and the new US population-centric counter-insurgency doctrine are credited with ending the Sunni insurgency in Iraq and winning the war. David Edwards, after pointing out that the few examples of 'successful' counter-insurgency '*all come from imperial contexts, including Afghanistan and the tribal borderlands of India under the Pax Britannica*' invokes the authority of classic colonial texts by referring to Mountstuart Elphinstone[5], Evelyn Howell[6] and Olaf Caroe[7] as examples of popular colonial accounts that '*can be taken as both detailed, closely observed ethnographies of specific tribal groups and as practical primers in the art of dealing with Afghan tribes*' (Edwards 2010, 15-18). Hopkins then makes the key observation that Elphinstone's work produced in the early part of the nineteenth century provided the scholarly template for subsequent colonial scholarship on Afghanistan and did much to validate the tribal and stateless view of Afghanistan and the Pashtun borderlands (B. D. Hopkins 2008).

Seth Jones, the self-styled counter-insurgency expert at the Rand Corporation describes Afghanistan as the 'land of the tribes' where all politics is local and emphasizss the importance of local power to political stability (Jones 2009). According to this view, the United States has not recognised the local nature of Afghan politics: it has

**5.** Elphinstone, Mountstuart. 1815. An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and Its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary and India. Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown.

**6.** Evelyn Howell. 1931. Mizh: A Monograph on Government's Relations with the Mahsud Tribe.

**7.** Caroe, Olaf. 1958. The Pathans: 55O B.C-A.D 1957. London: Macmillan & Co.

AZIZ HAKIMI

wrongly based its intervention on a fatally flawed assumption that the recipe for stability is building a strong centralised government, which is then expected to established law and order in rural areas that are caught up in the grip of a brutal insurgency. Afghanistan, as Jones points out is different from Iraq, which had a highly centralised government.

In Afghanistan, Jones sees '*power as having come from the bottom up in Pashtun areas of the country*' and considers that attempts by Amanullah Khan (who ruled Afghanistan from 1919-1929) and the central government to '*push into rural areas sparked social and political revolts*', eventually forcing him to abdicate and flee the country. Rural resistance to central authority is apparently still strong and 'masses of rural Afghans today still reject a strong central government actively meddling in their affairs' (Jones 2009). Recalling the lessons of Amanullah Khan's successors (the Musahiban dynasty 1929-1978), Jones advocates a similarly cautious strategy in southern and eastern Afghanistan to engage the tribes, sub-tribes and other local institutions, including support to village-level defence forces called *arbaki* that were organised under the auspices of tribal institutions to establish order. Frank Ledwidge argues that counter-insurgency essentially operates at the local level and therefore state building at national level will have to give way to local engagement with traditional authorities, even though local solutions often collide with national aspirations: for example, arming local militias is hardly compatible with the modern state's ambition to achieve central monopoly over the legitimate means of violence; and local justice initiatives such as informal justice *shuras* may not comply with '*traditional ideas of judiciary holding the monopoly on final adjudicative authority*' (Ledwidge 2009).

The strategic shift from the initial focus on building central state institutions to then abandoning those ambitions and settling for a 'government in a box' approach a the local level has been prompted by a more practical problem which has confronted the US military in Afghanistan. Since its war against the Islamist insurgents was not going well, the problem, counterinsurgency advocates concluded, was the West's efforts to build a central state. The central government had failed to meet the needs of rural Afghans where it had little influence. Initially, counter-insurgency attempted to extend the influence of the central government to the rural areas and when that failed Western militaries started setting up local governance institutions at the village, district and provincial level and then tried to link them up to the top. It also got involved in promoting local solutions to the problems of development and security. Crucially, the success of US counter-insurgency doctrine is premised on the legitimacy of the host government, meaning the government that is the focus of US counter-insurgency. In Afghanistan, the unpopularity and perceived lack of legitimacy of the Karzai government presented a major problem for the advocates of counter-insurgency. As Barfield has pointed out '*in many regions of Afghanistan, the Karzai government is seen by the local population as part of the problem, not part of the solution*' (Horton 2010). After the apparent US success in Iraq, a change of strategy was needed in Afghanistan in order to save counter-insurgency from failing there.

## An Idealised Rural Vision

The idealised vision of rural Afghanistan, supported by reference to anthropology, where culturally distinct communities and isolated valleys enjoy self-rule and economic self-sufficiency (Shahrani 1998) and the claims that '*Afghans have ruled themselves for generations with little central government participation at the local level*' (Horton 2010) - despite the fact that in Barfield's own admission '*Afghanistan has been a single state for more than 250 years*' (Barfield 2011, p.54) - have been used to justify decentralising power to the provinces and districts as a way of overcoming lack of progress in NATO's war efforts. Until the advent of counter-insurgency, these efforts had been predominately in support of building (what turned out to be) a corrupt and predatory central government in Kabul (Hughes 2011; Barfield 2011). Barfield has argued that '*what a fragile state (and a COIN strategy) cannot easily survive is a badly designed government run by an ineffective leader*' (Horton 2010). Therefore, he advised the US government to '*decouple its interests from those of the Karzai regime by empowering the local population and dealing with their community leaders directly*' (Horton 2010).

It is not surprising that after years of claiming to build a centralised state, followed by growing disillusionment with the Karzai government, a war that was increasingly seen as a lost cause and the growth of insurgency in rural areas after 2006 provided the US military and Western governments with the pretext - and indeed the justification - to intensify their efforts to work around the government in Kabul and directly engage with local authorities, including tribal leaders and informal *shuras*. While the call for decentralisation through a constitutional framework has been resisted by the Afghan government, US counter-insurgency has none the less attempted to empower local leaders and strengthen local governance institutions in support of its war effort. This amounted to a *de facto* decentralisation of power.

## The ALP & the Role of the *Shura*s

A major element of the US counter-insurgency strategy, the Afghan Local Police (ALP), a country-wide local militias programme which aims to arm 30,000 local security forces under the control of the Afghan government, financed by the US military, makes a strong case for the involvement of local *shuras* in nominating and vetting local recruits. The involvement of *shuras* in local security is viewed as the key to safeguarding against attempts to manipulate the programme and avoiding past mistakes with militias that turned on local communities and brought down the government after the departure of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. The *shura*s through which the ALP operates are either existing *shuras*, such as those established by the Afghan government's Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) through the Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP); or, where there are no existing *shuras*, the local administration with help from US Special Forces (which also trains, pays and arms the ALP units) has established *shuras* in locations agreed for ALP roll out. These new *shuras* are often established in areas where insurgents are active

and where insecurity is a major challenge. The displacement of the local population due to conflict and intimidation by insurgents adds to the challenge of creating representative new *shuras*. Since 2006, a number of local security initiatives have tried to use the *shuras* to recruit local militias. However, independent assessments of such initiatives have generally been negative (Human Rights Watch (HRW) 2011), although the US military continues to speak positively of the ALP, especially in terms of improving local security.

### *Shuras*, *Jihadis* & Local Level Accountability: Strategic Engagement or Muddling Through?

On-going attempts by the ALP to use *shuras* and establish some sort of accountability to local communities has been found to lag far behind the programme's original intent. Local communities in a number of provinces where research into the programme has been conducted have complained of unrepresentative *shuras*, their capture by local commanders, coercion to participate in them and nominate local recruits, and abusive practices by local ALP units and indeed, criminality.

In Wardak, after years of attempts by the government to improve the programme, the provincial governor recently sent a formal request to President Karzai asking the central government to disband the ALP in the province.[8] In place of ALP militias, which have failed to deal with the insurgency, the governor has requested additional national army and police forces for Wardak to improve local security. Many senior government officials in private made the point that despite their goodwill, the Americans were unlikely to succeed in setting up representative *shuras* or enlist the support of the local communities for the ALP, because tribal leaders and local elders had no influence and were unable to garner local support for such initiatives.

The default option then became to rely on local officials and *jihadi* commanders like Ghulam Mohammad Hotak, who in 2009 when the US military initially failed to get local recruits through the *shuras*, brought 500 of his local fighters into the Afghan Public Protection Programme (AP3), the precursor to the ALP (Lefèvre 2012). A local security official bluntly made the point that the Americans were looking for a few needles in a hay stack.[9] Reflecting their poor understanding of Afghanistan and its human terrain, local officials chided the Americans for their effort to find genuine tribal leaders, when few existed and most of them faced constant intimidations from the insurgents anyway. Some local elders approached by the government and the US military have openly resisted attempts to get co-opted, citing fear of retribution and betrayals by government when they did cooperate with local security schemes in the past.[10] As a result, the government and the US military end up working with entrepreneurial elders and local commanders who lack credibility among their own communities, but are useful interlocutors for the Americans with money. They prove useful in maintaining the façade of tradition and local *shuras* and contribute to the self-styled success of Western projects. A number of senior government officials in Wardak privately admit that working through corrupt local allies has doomed such programmes. However all sides agree that too much was at stake to let these initiatives fail by pointing out the obvious. So the muddling through continues. This

8. Interviews with local officials, May and August 2012. Wardak and Kabul.
9. Interview with senior security official, February 2012. Wardak.
10. Interview, former AP3 commander in Maidanshahr, December 2011. Wardak.

brief account of the ALP in Wardak makes it clear that in contemporary Afghanistan, the tribes or traditional leaders do not hold real power at the local level (Dorronsoro 2012). In their place, a new social class of commanders and insurgents has emerged (Giustozzi 2009) whose control over private militias and rent seeking enables them to profit from the war and aid economy of the 'unending wars' of the twenty first century, '*when waging wars is more important than winning them*' (Keen 2012).

These findings resonate well with some of the critical perspectives coming out of recent scholarship.

## The Pashtun Borderlands

Hopkins has shown that the tribal view of Afghanistan and its Pashtun borderlands and attempts to rule it through tradition has been primarily a creation of the colonial mind-set (Benjamin D. Hopkins 2011). The NATO military campaign against the Taliban-dominated insurgency, which has been dubbed as a 'war against the Pashtuns' (Lieven 2012), where the West has walked into the middle of a 'civil war' and taken sides in the war by supporting the Kabul-based Karzai government and his northern warlord allies against the rural and Pashtun dominated Taliban, is another example of the continuation of the old British colonial theme that the 'real' Afghans are rural conservative Pashtuns and everyone else are just 'minorities' or misguided modernists. Like the Americans today, the British Empire followed the same flawed strategy more than a century ago. Nearly all elements of the current counter-insurgency strategy, from 'clear and hold' tactics to arming 'tribal militias,' have their origins in the activities of British colonial administrators, according to Hopkins and Marsden (2011). As an example of a pioneer of the system of 'indirect rule', Sir Robert Groves Sandeman distinguished himself in his dealings with the tribes of the Afghan frontier. In 1891 he insisted that to control the people of the Afghan frontier, the British had to appeal to their hearts and minds (and pockets). By '*knowing the tribes*', Sir Robert believed he could rule them through their 'traditions' - '*something both more legitimate in the eyes of the tribesmen and cheaper for the colonial state*' (B. Hopkins and Marsden 2011). He recruited local tribesmen into state-sponsored militias to police the frontier on behalf of the British. But, rather than bolstering state authority, reliance on indirect rule led to further fragmentation and discord among the tribes. As a result, the people of the frontier ended up inhabiting a no-man's land where the state exercised little control. Today, this area constitutes Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, which has become a safe heaven for local and foreign militants.

The current US counter-insurgency doctrine has been significantly inspired by the history of colonial experiences of Britain and France and the US interventions in Vietnam and Latin America (Khalili 2010). Taking their cue from the 19th century policies of British colonial administrators on the frontier, the US and its allies have made extensive use of the 'native traditions' to win local hearts and minds and bolster their authority. Today '*American soldiers sit in tribal jirgas, or assemblies, to win the support of local elders; tribal*

*militias called arbakai are recruited to police the populace. But rather than showing the sophistication of the military's cultural knowledge, these efforts merely demonstrate to Afghans the coalition's poor understanding of local cultures*' (B. Hopkins and Marsden 2011). The social transformation brought about by war and displacement means that even in the southeast where apparently tribal structures function better than other areas in the country, the cynical use of these native traditions is unlikely to improve US counter-insurgency.

As succinctly noted by a tribal elder in Paktia, the crucial point of emphasis about the US tribal engagement strategy is that '*30 years of war means that everybody acts independently, not according to tradition*' (B. Hopkins and Marsden 2011).

### Tribe, State & Orientalism

In social sciences, the concept of the tribe, like the state, has been a controversial one. Gonzalez argues that '*few anthropologists today would consider using the term 'tribe' as an analytical category, or even as a concept for practical application*' (Gonzalez 2009, 15). Tapper argues that attempts to establish a stable terminology for the tribes or viewing them as primitive, and indeed the dichotomy of state and tribe are misdirected, while '*tribe and state have created and maintained each other in a single system, though one of inherent instability*' (Tapper 1990, 55-56).

It is possible, then, to conclude that these timeless imageries of native traditions and tribes acting according to an enduring code of conduct are clearly influenced by the concept of orientalism. Gregory argues that '*[i]n its classical form, Orientalism constructs the Orient as a space of the exotic and the bizarre, the monstrous and the pathological - what Said called 'a living tableau of queerness' - and then summons it as a space to be disciplined through the forceful imposition of the order that it is presumed to lack: 'framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual*'' (Gregory 2008, 17). The orientalism evident in counter-insurgency literature is most poignantly demonstrated by reference to and constant citation of the early twentieth century British colonial officer, T.E. Lawrence (Gregory 2008, 17-18). Lawrence's profound influence upon succeeding generations of counter-insurgents is most clearly found in the works of John Nagl (2005) and David Kilcullen (2009), both influential COIN readings.

Finally, it is important to note that the recent turn to 'tradition' and the elevation of 'local' has been presented by its advocates as a hollowed space and barrier against external intervention and imposition of liberal ideas. As a result, local approaches to justice, governance and security are increasingly presented as means to avoid the imposition of Western values, and hence something more inherently legitimate and essentially emancipatory (Grissom 2010; Richmond 2010). However, when Western intervention in these fields is studied empirically, there is in fact a glaring gap between the claims made about authenticity and non-interference and the actual processes through which 'local' forms of security and justice are promoted, which are essentially intrusive and dominating.[11]

## War and Social Transformation

Afghanistan has undoubtedly changed since the demise of British colonial rule in the sub-continent.

These changes have been most clearly manifest in the last four decades because of the impact of the war in Afghanistan. Migration, foreign aid and NGOs and changes in the political economy of the region, especially the rise of warlords and commanders has changed Afghanistan in significant ways. Because of the war, the men of religion and arms saw their power and prestige increase and '*the mullahs are not short-term figures but are part of strong institutions, madrasas, and political parties, able to mobilize much more resources than any tribes*' (Dorronsoro 2012, 42).

### Disintegration & the Rise of New Elites

These changes have occurred along several lines. They include the weakening of tribal power, disintegration of state control and the rise of new social elites as a consequence of war and loss of state control. The traditional political order of the Tribal Areas was defined by indirect rule in Pakistan and to a lesser extent in Afghanistan. The tribes were both autonomous of, and encapsulated by, the state. This pattern has significantly changed in both countries in the last few decades. The once powerful landed gentry, the tribal notables have lost their influence and are no longer powerful locally (Dorronsoro 2012). In Afghanistan, the politically influential class of Durrani monarchs and landed gentry, the *sardars,* have been replaced by commoners - communists, commanders, mullahs, and the nouveau riche and minorities (Barfield 2010; Edwards 2002). As the war swept the country, the influence of the tribal elite was replaced by an emerging class of neo-*Khans* - commanders and warlords who relied on their militias for power.

The main challenge to state authority is thus no longer from tribal groups, and the traditional model of uprising against the state - the uneasy alliance between the tribes and the mullah (the 'mad mullah', as described by British sources) has disappeared, according to Dorronsoro (2012, 40). Even before the leftist coup in 1978, the expanding Afghan state had significantly downgraded the power of the tribal leaders and changes in the economy had similarly affected the power and influence of the feudal *khans* (Anderson 1978). After 1978 tribal leaders were killed in large numbers by the communists and Islamists, a trend that has continued under the Taliban. In Helmand and Kandahar, the Taliban have killed hundreds of tribal leaders accused of collaborating with the government and US/NATO forces. In the midst of this, President Karzai and the US military continue to talk about the tribes.[12] The US military, heavily influenced by the colonial rendering of Afghanistan, continues to insist on the validity of the tribes and tribal elders when in reality '*there are no khans anymore*' and the old institutional framework of tribal Pashtuns has been severely weakened as *mullahs* and commanders have taken their place (Dorronsoro 2012). Islam although remaining important to most Afghans, has lost its appeal as a state ideology after the excesses of the Taliban regime before 2001.

12. Interview with former minister, June 2012, Kabul.

AZIZ HAKIMI

### Instrumentalism & Tribal Engagement

The US military's strategy of 'tribal engagement' serves as a useful distraction to shift attention away from its own involvement with, and support to, militia commanders and warlords.

On the one hand, the US military spends hundreds of billions of dollars on its military effort in Afghanistan, large proceeds from which empower militia commanders, and on the other hand, it clings to an old and out-dated colonial repertoire of tribes and Pashtun society. The strategy of tribal engagement pursued by the US military could leave in its wake a potentially problematic legacy for Afghanistan. The instrumental use of tribes by NATO against the Taliban, ostensibly to strengthen the authority of the central government, could possibly reinforce regional autonomy and indirect rule similar to the dynamics in the Kurdish areas of Turkey. Klein argues that the Ottoman state's attempts to integrate the frontier areas by bribing tribal leaders and arming local militias, in order to address internal and external threats, ended up reinforcing the power of state-appointed tribal leaders leading to greater regionalism and social fragmentation, ultimately downgrading the power of the state (Klein 2011).[13] This contradictory state effect is clearly observable in the strategies of most Afghan rulers, testifying to the fact that state policies were instrumental in the survival and political relevance of the tribes (Dorronsoro 2012). For example, in the eastern parts of Afghanistan '*the tribes [were] more protected from the penetration of state administration, but functioned in practices as a means to relay state action. Paradoxically, the more institutionalized the tribes (as in the east), the more local and enmeshed they are in state structures far from being exterior to state structures, the tribes were a relay and part of the political system. This is why the tribes were not an alternative to the state, as demonstrated after 1979 in the countryside, where the commanders, and not the tribes, became the basic political structures*' (Dorronsoro 2012, 41).

The Taliban have essentially tried to undermine the power of the tribes by marginalising tribal elders in order to supersede the tribal system and create solidarity across tribal groups, as a form of trans-tribal solidarity network in order to mobilise recruits for the insurgency. The rise of the Taliban is a direct result of the political marginalisation of the tribes. They are ideologically opposed to tribal politics. As a consequence, the tribal system is generally weak in most parts of Afghanistan. Indeed, in one sense, the Taliban's attempts against the tribes can be read as an attempt to 'de-tribalise' Afghanistan, essentially a modernising project, while the NATO policy of working with the tribes is essentially an attempt to 're-tribalise' Afghanistan, potentially a regressive development.

## Local Power Dynamics in Nangarhar

### Overview

Nangarhar with a population of 1.4 million, mostly Pashtun, is considered the political, economic and cultural capital of eastern

Afghanistan, where the US military also maintains a Special Operations Forces base at Jalalabad airport. Its economy is closely integrated with the transit trade passing through the Torkham border crossing. The province serves as a key conduit for the movement of ideas, capital, commodities and people. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) maintains its Regional Command-East in Nangarhar. The presence of international military forces and the associated war-and-aid economy has significantly shaped the local political and economic scene.

The scale of this war-and-aid economy was modest in the early period, but has grown significantly over the years. Between 2002-08, the US had invested $221.6 million in Nangarhar (Mukhopadhyay 2012). In 2009, the aid volume reached $150 million largely in response to Governor Shirzai's successful ban on poppy cultivation in 2007-08. US military contracts for goods and services bring further dividends to the local economy. The US military relied on CERP (Commanders Emergency Response Programme) funds to support its counter-insurgency strategy. In 2010-11, the amount of CERP funds allocated to Nangarhar was $82 million (PI 2010). Apart from the war-and-aid economy, the mainstay of the local economy is trade in imported goods, which has flourished since the fall of the Taliban regime. Security along the Kabul-Jalalabad-Torkham road and demands for exports to feed the local construction boom and supply the national market have encouraged modest economic growth. Poppy cultivation and the smuggling of drugs are also a significant feature of the economy in the border districts like Khogyani. Cultivation of poppy remained significant until Governor Shirzai's ban in 2007-08.

## The Rise & Fall of Commanders: the New Power Brokers

After the fall of the leftist government in 1992, Nangarhar was ruled by a relatively stable coalition known as the *Jalalabad Jihadi Shura* until the Taliban captured the province in 1996. The *Shura*, headed by Haji Qader, was made up of half a dozen different *mujahideen* factions and the commanders that nominally represented them. When the US military decided to invade Afghanistan and topple the Taliban regime, it looked for local allies for support. In eastern Afghanistan it found willing allies in *mujahideen* commanders such as Abdul Haq[14] and Haji Qader[15], belonging to the influential Arsala family and Hazrat Ali and Haji Zaman. After being discredited in the civil war that followed the departure of the Soviet troops, the US military intervention made it possible for these commanders to rise to power and become the main beneficiaries of the post-Taliban order. The three winning factions initially agreed to form a 'coalition government' and shared power.[16] However, the political settlement remained unstable. A separate political alliance emerged between Haji Qader and the Pashai leader Hazrat Ali to weaken Haji Zaman, eventually forcing him to relinquish power.

A prominent example of the rise of new power brokers at the sub-national level is Hazrat Ali, the Pashai *jihadi* commander from Nangarhar. Before the war he made a modest living as a local shepherd and a small time labourer in his native community in northern Nangarhar. Today, he is a powerful commander and head of his Pashai tribe. He rose to power during the *jihad* against the Soviets and occupied important positions in

**14.** In late October 2001, Abdul Haq was captured and killed by the Taliban as he tried to mobilise the eastern Pashtuns in support of the US military campaign.

**15.** Haji Qader became the governor of Nangarhar after the fall of the communist regime. He was forced to flee the country when the Taliban's captured Jalalabad in 1996. Qader returned in 1999 to support the Northern Alliance against the Taliban. He was assassinated in Kabul in July 2002.

**16.** The Governor's post was occupied by Haji Qader. Hazrat Ali became head of Army Corps. Haji Zaman became Chief of Police.

AZIZ HAKIMI

the local administration before the Taliban came to power. In 2001 he allied himself with the invading US forces to hunt down Taliban and Al Qaeda members in the Tora Bora mountains. The Karzai government made him the chief of police in Nangarhar. He maintains active links to his armed followers and is currently a Member of Parliament. He is considered an important power broker in Nangarhar's political scene with strong links to powerful men in Kabul. It is men like Hazrat Ali who bridge the link between provincial and central political spaces. The transformation is indeed quite remarkable: a local shepherd becoming the lord of his tribe and the political master of one of the largest and wealthiest borderlands in Afghanistan.

After the death of Haji Qader, power within the influential Arsala family has shifted to younger members. A semi-aristocratic family, the Arsala clan has a long history of involvement in Afghan politics. In 2001, Haji Zahir, a second-generation commander-turned-politician and the political heir of Haji Qader, joined the US forces in the Tora Bora campaign to capture fleeing Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters. Until 2006, he was the head of the Afghan Border Police in Nangarhar. When Gul Agha Shirzai was appointed governor of Nangarhar in 2005, disputes with Haji Zahir over rents from business activities, including the drugs trade, resulted in the latter's transfer to Takhar Province.

In 2007, a US trained team of Afghan counternarcotics officers arrested five members of the Afghan Border Police in Takhar on charges of smuggling drugs (Stockman 2009). One of the arrested men was a nephew of Haji Din Mohammad, the former Governor of Kabul and a cousin of Haji Zahir, the Chief of the Border Police in Takhar. The five men, including Din Mohammad's nephew were sentenced to prison terms of between sixteen and eighteen years. In the lead-up to the 2009 presidential elections, the five men were pardoned (Stockman 2009). At the time Haji Din Mohammad was President Karzai's re-election campaign manager and is believed to have facilitated their release. Haji Zahir is accused of having arranged the payment of large sums of money to provincial and national authorities to facilitate the movements of drugs and the release of traffickers. A recent letter from the Attorney General's Office accused Haji Zahir of involvement in the drugs trade.[17] During the re-election of President Karzai, Haji Zahir served as his election campaign manager in Nangarhar. In preparation for the 2010 Parliamentary elections, he started a political party, *Peace Caravan*, and went on to contest the 2010 parliamentary elections, which he won and entered the national Parliament.

### Shifting Allegiances: the Roles of the Power Brokers & Their Families

Haji Zahir was involved in heated debates and power struggles in Parliament after the 2010 elections. In a shift of allegiance, he sided with the opposition in Parliament, which was constituted to defy President Karzai's attempts to change the election results in order to accommodate his loyalists who had lost. For months, Kazai was mired in a protracted conflict and negotiations with Parliamentarians, members of the political opposition and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The President established a Special Electoral Tribunal under the

**17.** The letter from the Attorney General's Office quoted by a local newswire mentioned a figure of $100,000 for a single drugs smuggling operation carried out by Haji Zahir's men in Takhar (Samimi 2011).

authority of the Supreme Court, which after a hurried investigation ruled out in favour of President Karzai and his camp by nullifying the electoral results of sixty-two MPs. In response to opposition from his rivals, the President ordered the removal of only a handful of MPs. Haji Zahir played a leading role in these power struggles. It was around this time that the Attorney General's Office issued a public subpoena asking him to appear before prosecutors on charges of involvement in the drugs trade dating back to his time as Chief of Police of Takhar (Stockman 2009; Samimi 2011). The case against him fizzled out once the parliamentary crises got resolved. In early 2012, he was elected as a Deputy Speaker of Parliament. Other prominent members of the family who are influential at the provincial level include Haji Jamal Khan and Haji Nasrat.[18] Jamal Khan is the younger brother of Haji Zahir and until recently was head of Nangarhar's Provincial Council. He was removed after an armed clash with a business ally of Governor Shirzai. Hazrat Ali reportedly played a key role in mediating the conflict. He has also formed an alliance with Haji Zahir against Shirzai.

In 2005 President Karzai appointed Gul Agha Shirzai[19] to replace Haji Din Mohammad as Governor of Nangarhar. The decision to send Shirzai to Nangarhar might have been motivated by his desire to see his own brother, Abdul Wali Karzai, emerge as the lynchpin of his authority in the south. Karzai may have wanted to weaken Shirzai and his resources by preoccupying him with the challenge of asserting himself and consolidating his power in a difficult political environment like Nangarhar. The appointment created considerable political tensions as the Arsala family was reluctant to concede power. His arrival prompted the renegotiation of the political settlement among the local elites. President Karzai needed a ruthless and effective leader to end local squabbles and bring order and stability to the province. In need of local allies, Shirzai reached out to Hazrat Ali in order to downgrade the power of the Arsala family. The alliance with Hazrat Ali was the opening act as the Governor tried to reconfigure the province's power relations and consolidate his position. He began to co-opt former *mujahideen* commanders, tribal leaders and powerful businessmen. In a sense he was both expanding and reconfiguring the elite settlement. The political settlement under Shirzai represented a number of different arrangements, from a 'grand bargain' with President Karzai to 'mini bargains' with local elites and 'rental agreements' with the US military and international civilian aid agencies. While some rivals were excluded from the new settlement, new allies were brought in. To succeed in his schemes, Shirzai had to rely on a mixed cocktail of coercion (or the threat of it), resource extraction (capital and arms) and political prestige (legitimacy) mostly through redistributive policies to productive elites. The political settlement weaved together by Governor Shirzai involved bargaining between the ruler and his politically and economically active rivals over coercion, capital and the legitimacy that official power bestows upon a ruler (Tilly 1992).

**The Power Nexus: Control & Capital**

The maintenance of power requires control and access to capital.

Shirzai employed a hybrid strategy of resource extraction, relying on both domestic and international sources. The hundreds of millions of

**18.** Nasrat is the son of Haji Din Mohammad and served one term as head of the Provincial Council.

**19.** Before he took up the post of Governor in Nagarhar, Gul Agha Shirzai was Governor of Kandahar, his traditional power base. Like the commanders in Nangarhar, he was brought to power with the help of US military.

dollars in foreign economic aid and military spending, custom revenue,[20] private donations and rents from the illegal sale of electricity and government-owned lands spawned a construction boom in the province as new roads, schools, clinics, offices and housing estates were built. Shirzai first started to collect private donations from traders under the 'Governor's Reconstruction Fund' and when President Karzai declared it illegal, he simply diverted the money to his private foundation, the *Shirzai Foundation*. The governor has confirmed the collection of private donations, but insists the money is being used for reconstruction projects. The Foundation is essentially used as an instrument of patrimonial rule. It is estimated that he collects about $35 million annually in private denotations.[21]

The development boom quickly solidified Governor's Shirzai reputation as the 'neo-*Khan*' of Nangarhar. To improve his image as a reformed governor, Shirzai announced and enforced a ban on poppy cultivation. The decline in poppy cultivation increased his stature with the US government, ISAF and aid agencies. His counter-narcotics gains were amply rewarded: as aid and contracts increased, so did the Governor's cash flow and patronage base. Despite his official position, he operated openly in the local market competing with other companies and contractors for projects awarded by the US Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Nangarhar. Shirzai reportedly owns construction, logistics and private security companies and has publicly defended his decision to steer lucrative contracts in the direction of his own companies, claiming they are more effective and offer better services and value (Jawad 2011). Influential business leaders like Haji Farooq, Gul Murad and Najib Zarab are important political allies of the Governor. Shirzai reportedly owns shares in each of their businesses. This peculiar brand of patronage politics has been instrumental in his efforts to forge strategic alliances and weave 'elite pacts', by awarding some power brokers as political and business allies and downgrading the power of rivals by excluding them from access to lucrative contracts and denying them appointments in the province's local administration.

## Decline But Not - Yet - a Fall?

In the last year or so, Shirzai's main political rivals have agitated to oust him from power.

In February 2011, members of the Provincial Council and parliamentarians from Nangarhar took their growing differences with Governor Shirzai, mostly over the control and distribution of power and local resources into the open by publicly demanding his resignation (Jawad 2011). A few days before he was asked to resign, the Taliban had launched a large-scale suicide and small arms attack on a branch of the Kabul Bank in central Jalalabad. Live footage of the attack obtained from the bank's CCTV was broadcasted a few days later to a nation-wide audience by a private TV channel. The incident sent shock waves through the local community and in the capital Kabul. Because of its scale, killing more than forty and injuring seventy, the incident became a huge political embarrassment for Governor Shirzai. Although agitations by his political adversaries have increased, including on charges of illegal taxation, corruption and misuse of public funds, the Governor continues to have the backing of the US government.[22]

20. In 2008/09, the amount of customs duty generated in Nangarhar was about $66 million. Total government revenue sent to the central Government that year amounted to $101 million (Goodhand and Mansfield 2010, 12).

21. This estimate of Governor Shirzai's private fortune obtained from taxing commercial transport along the Jalalabad-Torkham road and donations from local businessmen is from (Mukhopadhyay 2012). The Governor regularly pockets rents obtained from municipal services, the illegal sale of electricity and the Government owned olive factory at Hadda.

22. A Member of Parliament claims that the Americans told him not to interference with the Governor's affairs and give up attempts to unseat him from power (Jawad 2011).

Shirzai's supporters believe that the charges of corruption and lack of security are pretexts used by his rivals to unseat him from power. There are, however, few signs that Shirzai is likely to be replaced anytime soon.  He continues to enjoy the backing of President Karzai, despite the souring of relations in 2009 when Shirzai decided to enter the presidential race.  With his American patrons on the way out, Shirzai might eventually decide to leave for Kandahar, his traditional stronghold, accept a position in Kabul or run in next year's presidential election.

## Armed Politics & Local Power Dynamics

The most prominent category of new elites and a relatively constant feature of the local political scene are the militia commanders.

As a border province, Nangarhar's politics and economics are also tied with and affect cross-border and regional regimes of political control (Goodhand 2009).  In situations where no clear winners emerge from war, rulers with control over the means of violence, like the present-day commanders in Afghanistan, eventually agree to stop fighting.  They turn to negotiation and bargaining in order to forge a political settlement or peace accord.  These political coalitions are regimes of 'elite power' and their function is to limit access to power and resources in favour of the ruling class, and in doing so create incentives for its members to avoid fighting, cooperate in ensuring stability and share the rents accrued from manipulating the economic system.  The transition from 'limited access orders' to 'open access orders' is marked by institutional development, the autonomy of markets from political interference and economic growth (North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009).

The current power brokers in Nangarhar were elevated to power during the US campaign to capture Osama Bin Laden in late 2001. The political settlement that emerged in Nangarhar in late 2002 became the basis for the 'joint systems of extraction' and control over local resources that in turn sustain the different types of political settlements agreed among the elites.  As it happens, these kinds of political settlements are constantly renegotiated at the periphery among local elites and as a result could have a critical influence on political arrangements and stability at the national level.  Continued rivalries among allies, the change in power relations between members of the political coalition and the entry of new actors into the provincial scene have necessitated the renegotiation of old arrangements and their replacement by new pacts.

The most noteworthy change prompting the renegotiation of the original political settlement in Nangarhar relates to two highly critical events: one was the killing of Haji Qader in July 2002 and the instalment of his brother Haji Din Mohammad as Governor of Nangarhar.  The second factor that changed political bargaining and institutional arrangements was the appointment in 2005 of Gul Agha Shirzai as Governor of Nangarhar.  Recent agitations by Governor Shirzai's rivals to oust him from power may yet again prompt local elites to reconfigure a new political coalition and renegotiate a new 'elite pact'.

AZIZ HAKIMI

## Sources of Authority & Power

Local power brokers derive their power and authority from many sources. They include family wealth and prestige, control over armed militias as former *jihadi* commander or warlord, involvement in or rents from the drugs trade, access to local resources such as government posts and customs revenue, links to lucrative ISAF contracts, including private security and reconstruction funds and armed competition in the private sector through ownership of construction and logistic companies.

These resources can be the source of stability, when joint extractive regimes can be cobbled together or conversely become a source of insecurity when competition over dwindling resources increases and breaks out in armed struggles or acts of political sabotage.

The multiple and overlapping relationships between power brokers in the region is a manifestation of the nature of patrimonial politics at the periphery. The web of relationships criss-crosses provincial lines, regional nodes and reaches out to the centre in Kabul. At the local level they link up with representatives of the state, foreign military forces, local militia and insurgent commanders. Political bargains among local power brokers allow them to access vital resources and insecure areas, control and distribute these resources, maintain political alliances, including with the centre, and fend off challenges to power.[23]

Nangarhar's unstable power structure and relations among the elites has the potential to open possibilities for intervention from regional powers seeking to influence developments in the region. The anticipated reduction in Western aid, being central to the local elite settlement, would force local power brokers to find alternative means of patronage. The current level of aid to the province is considered too high to sustain in the long term. Some level of instability, if temporary, is anticipated as local power brokers intensify their struggles for limited resources. This may lead them towards the capture of natural resources like timber and drugs and rents from economic activities like cross-border trade. The demands for resources from the centre would increase as resources from local sources like the PRT decline. This possibility provides the opportunity for renegotiating centre-periphery relations. Membership of a local political coalition and links to powerbrokers in the central government allows access to lucrative government posts and control over provincial revenues. Since access to these resources is modulated through government channels and subject to state sanction, local power brokers are inclined to maintain workable centre-periphery relations. The benefits flow in both direction, provincial power brokers with access to resources routinely contribute to political campaigns of central state elites. Greater amounts of provincial resources are likely to be diverted to private spheres to maintain dominance over rivals and maintain centre-periphery relations, as exemplified by Shirzai's siphoning off of provincial customs revenue to his private foundation, to resource his patronage politics.

## Adjusting to Change

These dynamics then beg the question of how local power brokers are adjusting (or not) to the anticipated changes in the war-and-aid

**23.** Evidence of deals by Government-allied power brokers and state official with insurgents are means of protection and keeping some level of stability at the local level. State sanction, as Government representatives or members of the border police, provides cover for local power brokers to capture and extract illicit resources.

economy and what impact is this having on the nature of local power dynamics?

There are indications that changes in the political economy of the province, notably the withdrawal of foreign forces and the reduction of aid, may have already contributed to the renegotiation of political settlements at the periphery.  Sensing Shirzai's vulnerability, the province's other strongman, Hazrat Ali has reportedly joined Shirzai's rival, the Arsala family, in order to increase his chances of maintaining power and adjust to possible changes to the local power structure. These developments, in turn, are likely to force the renegotiation of political alliances between Shirzai, his supporters and other rivals to increase his chances of offsetting the threat from the Arsala family.  The renegotiation of such deals temporarily results in outburst of violence as evidenced by recent conflict over land between rival Shinwari tribes.  The Arsala family and Shirzai supported different sides in the conflict further exacerbating the existing conflict (Foschini 2011).

As the 'transition'[24] evolves further and the effect of changes in Western policy begin to bite, possible scenarios include:

I.   A reduction in violence and the consolidation of existing elite bargains at the centre and periphery, with possible inclusion of some insurgents, whereby the current form of oligarchic power continues to function but would require the removal of those power brokers who have militarily opposed the insurgents;
II.  The conflict continues at more or less the same level with insurgents outside the political bargain and limited government control over rural areas and greater control over Kabul and major urban centres;
III.  There is a reasonable expectation of a further fragmentation of central control and greater decentralisation of power, whereby provincial power brokers as a political coalition gain more autonomy and the centre loses its significance in terms of source of patronage and mediator and enforcer of political agreements, as happened in the early 1990s.  The reverse is also possible with Kabul becoming more dependent on the processes of extraction and exchange in Nangarhar.  Local militias linked to local power brokers might assume a greater role in fighting the insurgency, enforcing discipline, ensuring security and protecting key assets such as border points, customs revenue, trade routes, poppy fields, mines and forests.  This would reduce the relevance of the central government and national armed forces. Conflicts would increasingly take a local shape and significance.

## Political Disintegration & the Insurgency

If political and possibly armed competition between local power brokers leads to the disintegration of the political coalition, the insurgency is likely to capitalise on it and capture parts of Nangarhar and by association parts of eastern Afghanistan as an alternative-state space of Taliban government.  Some progress in negotiations with the Taliban and other insurgents, coupled with maintaining modest levels of international aid and revenue from illicit trade and share of natural resources, could prevent a complete breakdown of the 'oligarchic'

24. Referring to withdrawal of Western forces, transfer of security and political responsibility to the Afghan Government and reduction in aid levels.

AZIZ HAKIMI

power system currently in place at the centre and periphery. Coercive power will play an important role in maintaining order. This highlights the need to strengthen the Afghan armed forces in the lead up to 2014. Local and central political settlements are certainly likely to undergo changes, but the prospect or the likelihood of a civil war remains doubtful in Nangarhar. The combination of resource extraction possibilities from the local economy and the long standing tradition of coalition politics are factors of possible stability as foreign forces leave. It is possible that a low intensity conflict may persist for some time until more durable political settlements are forged, to include some of the present power brokers and elements from the insurgency. The factional fighting, rivalries and competition for power and resources and the elite bargains in many ways explain the larger dynamics of conflict, consolidation and the unravelling of political order. The recurring cycles of revenge seeking and downgrading of the power of rivals to a large extent dominate the current power struggles of the local elites in the province. Afghanistan's recent history and troubles, could in some ways be explained by the rise and fall of local commanders. The transition and post-transition phases also are likely to be determined by similar calculations and actions, and in that sense the political outcomes are somewhat predictable, if unstable.

## Conclusions

The instrumental use of the tribes as a weapons-system against the Taliban by US counter-insurgency has the potential to 're-tribalise' Afghan society and reinforce existing tendencies of regionalism and forms of indirect rule, characterised by partial sovereign territorial and juridical claims and suspended human rights. In turn, Afghan traditions and their timeless properties are elevated as the source of local legitimacy and authority. Conversely, the modern state is rendered a misfit and an historical anomaly that is ill suited to the lands of the tribes as the place of anarchy and disorder. In the end, counter-insurgency reinforces the old dichotomies of the local versus national, the rural versus urban and the modern versus tribal.

The whole Afghan nation is effectively split into two human categories, one urban and the other rural, one modern and the other primitive.

Some people are protected, while others become the focus of imperial violence.

Some are endowed with national rights, while the vast majority of the population is deprived of such claims and entitlements by their designation as the oriental 'other', to be then governed by traditional institutions and authority which are primarily created and in the last instance validated by an imperial power.

The ceremonies organised by Special Forces to 'validate' the members of local *shuras* and ALP units are one vivid example of this kind of imperial validation of traditional authority. In fact many of these local *shuras* and ALP are coerced into formation, organised by, paid for, pushed into action and supervised by Special Forces. As a result, the validating

power in zones of occupation is shifted from the sovereign government and ultimately affirmed in the body of an imperial one.

From the start a problematic concept, 'population-centric' counter-insurgency has failed to either quell the insurgency, win Afghan hearts and minds, or protect the people who find themselves caught in an increasingly brutal conflict from which Western forces are desperately trying to extricate themselves. As is already evident in some parts of the country, there is little sign of the conflict resolving itself peacefully. On the contrary, the legacy of Western counter-insurgency may very well consist of self-preservation on the part of US and NATO forces[25] and further militarisation of Afghan society and 'localisation' of the conflict, signified by continued infighting among heavily armed rival militias linked to local power brokers (both NATO-funded and old *jihadi* groups), insurgent groups and government forces supported by US Special Forces and CIA hit squads.

In Nangarhar, the withdrawal of international forces could intensify the power struggles between the local competitors and encourage some actors to increase their influence at the expense of rivals.

The centre is also expected to get more involved in local conflicts and ways to shape new political possibilities as national elites intensify attempts to protect allies and undermine the power of rivals, as is already evident in parts of the North. That could set the main power holders on a new course of rearmament and attempts to forcibly grab power.

Changes in Western strategy might also mean that some of the power holders might relocate to their original power bases, in the case of Gul Agha Shirzai to Kandahar, while others who have openly opposed the insurgents might extricate themselves and go into exile. Others, like northern warlord Atta Mohammad Noor will intensify his efforts to rearm his former commanders and allies to increase his power. There is evidence of Atta distributing weapons to his allies in Mazar-i-Sharif, Baghlan and Kunduz in order to meet the threat of the insurgency, as well as in preparation for a possible 'civil war'. The lack of monopoly on coercion, by either the state or some regional 'warlord', and the high degree of accumulation and low levels of concentration of such means throughout the country presents significant challenges to stability and the prospects for peace. The violent ways and pursuit of 'armed politics'[26] of the country's power holders, both national actors and those at the periphery, together with the unresolved nature of long standing rivalries and competition for power, are likely to intensify external intervention and support for proxy forces to meet the demands of regional geo-politics as well as local 'civil wars'. Foremost, it is the fragmented nature of the polity and the on-going conflicts among violent elites as well as with insurgents that is the main source of external interference. Local conflicts have the ability to grow big and invite the interest and material resources of regional and distant powers.

## A Regional Economy of Conflict

Many of today's conflict entrepreneurs are tied to a global and regional economy of conflict: through connection to US and NATO forces

25. For example, in Wardak province US forces bribed and armed one insurgent group against another resulting in large scale armed clashes as a way of 'Afghanising' the conflict and protecting US forces from harm.
26. For discussion of 'armed politics' see (Giustozzi 2011).

AZIZ HAKIMI

as warlords, commanders and governors; and/or as insurgents to neighbouring powers like Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Connections to former patrons of the anti-Soviet *jihad* have either been maintained or recently revived. New connections to US/NATO forces serve as a means of keeping *jihadi* commanders and local power brokers properly resourced.

Countries with ties to the insurgency - Pakistan for example - will see its influence increase as the Taliban push for the capture of more territory from the Afghan government following the withdrawal of Western forces. In some places, as in Kunar, forward operating bases abandoned by the US military have already been 'liberated' by insurgents and transnational *jihadis* (Atal and Khoshnood 2011). As local competition for power and resources increases, the influence of regional actors would increase as possible sources of financial, military and political patronage. Conversely, their influence is likely to be circumscribed by the agendas of local power brokers in their quest for power and control of strategic resources. Unless they maintain the system of patronage to local power brokers, Western governments will see a sharp decline in their influence over violent actors. In particular, their ability to insist on reforms will drastically change and weaken. Regional rivalries, for example between India and Pakistan, might intensify. The anti-Taliban alliance represented by the former Northern Alliance also enjoys close ties to India, Russia and Iran and is likely to try to exploit these relationships. As previously mentioned, the regional dimension of the conflict in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region is closely linked to domestic political struggles in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Unless both countries change their current strategic thinking, there is little hope for an end to the violent politics in the region.

The departure of foreign forces would not only mean the shrinking of key resources and the vulnerability of local coalitions in power, increased competition and power struggles. It would also entail more autonomy and bargaining power for local power brokers in relation to the centre. They are likely to land up in a better position to renegotiate resource allocation and power arrangements in favour of the periphery, further weakening the central government. In the last ten years, the central government was able, to some extent, to renegotiate centre-periphery relations away from a 'war-economy' to a 'peace-economy'.[27] It managed to extract more resources from the periphery and constrain the power and resource extraction processes of local elites. As a consequence of changes in Western strategies, the transformation of the last ten years will undergo significant changes yet again, with the centre on course to lose its national significance and power, and key border provinces becoming more independent from the centre, less willing to share resources extracted in the periphery and more regionally integrated into the political economies of neighbouring countries. Local power brokers are likely to become more dependent on regional powers for finance and military support to fight rivals. All this means that regional powers will be in a better position to influence events in Afghanistan. As resources extracted from international players decrease, local power brokers would be forced to find new ways to generate revenues locally. The burden of resourcing might shift to the centre. The local political economy might transition towards a more

**27.** The terms 'war' and 'peace' economy are used to illustrate two different phases of political and economic transformations. However, there is no clean cut dichotomy between economic relations during war and peace, often the two phases merge and dissipate into each other, whereby economic practice and violent methods perfected in war would simply get entrenched in the post-war economy (Goodhand 2004).

'criminalised economy', with rent-seeking, demands for ransom, and the smuggling of arms and drugs arguably becoming the main features of the post-transition economy in Nangarhar and other borderlands. With the intensification of local power struggles, there is a potential for low intensity conflict, roadblocks and forcible taxation of economic activities. The transformation would then resemble the political economy of the early 1990s.

It is also conceivable that the withdrawal of foreign forces might take the sting out of the insurgency, as they could face problems justifying their *jihad* after the withdrawal of those forces. This could mean the reduction of violence. However, current efforts to negotiate peace with the Taliban have forced some regional actors, for example in parts of the North, to seek assistance from anti-Pakistan and anti-Taliban regional powers in preparation for an expected 'civil war'. There have also been calls for the overthrow of the regime if the Karzai government becomes too 'pro-Taliban' (Filkins 2012).

In the end, the West's chequered legacy from counter-terrorism and counterinsurgency is unlikely to succeed in erasing from public memory earlier Western pledges of building democracy and a modern nation-state in Afghanistan. Moreover, despite attempts by the U.S. military to re-write the history of the last decade, few Afghans are willing to believe the self-serving assertions by senior figures in the US military suggesting that after all is said and done, the United State is leaving Afghanistan to the Afghans in peace and harmony with its own culture and local customs (Rodriguez 2011).

In reality, after ten years of muddling through the mess of occupation, the United States is leaving behind a violently transformed landscape peppered with local militias and their unending turf wars, and only loosely held together by short term deals with and among competing local allies for whom violence and predation has become an effective means of staying in power.

## Afterword

Since September 2012, Afghanistan has been through a number of transitions. The era of 'transformative' counterinsurgency (COIN) has ended, paving the way for the United States and NATO to end its large-scale combat role and reduce its military and civilian spending in Afghanistan. In a 'back to the future' scenario, a much smaller counter-terrorism force mainly comprised of US Special Forces is now responsible for supporting Afghan security forces in battling the Taliban and the newly emergent threat of the Islamic State. The Taliban insurgency has grown stronger and now controls more Afghan territory than at any other time since they were driven out in late 2001. The capture of a number of strategic districts, and more importantly Kunduz City in September 2015 marked a new phase in the conflict: the Taliban insurgents have transitioned from a hit-and-run guerilla force operating in small bands to an 'insurgent army' capable of fielding hundreds of troops in battalion-size formations in conventional style military operations against a beleaguered Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), seriously overstretched by high attrition rates, low morale, and poor leadership.

The National Unity Government that emerged following a prolonged election crisis last year has been in power for just over a year. However, many Afghans have lost confidence that the internally-divided NUG, which came to power promising to transform the country's dystopian politics and its aid-dependent ailing economy will be able to improve the worsening security and hold its own against the resurgent Taliban and groups labeling themselves the Islamic State.

The Taliban resurgence, the emergence of the Islamic State and the lack of any tangible progress in the ongoing peace process have once again deepened the United States' and NATO's involvement in the Afghan conflict. In this unending war between Taliban - and increasingly Islamic State - 'barbarians' and 'civilisation' - represented by the United States and NATO, the forces of civilisation and barbarians mutually sustain each other. The Taliban thrive on the presence of 'foreign infidels', a reference to NATO and US forces, while at the same time Taliban's (and now Islamic State's) continued armed resistance against foreign occupation provides the justification for continued US military presence. Keeping out the barbarians may be a lucrative business. Whether it works or not - and indeed whether there are, in fact, barbarians - is beside the point (see Hakimi 2013).

After more than a decade of faltering engagement, the United States and its NATO allies seem to have concluded that it was cheaper and easier to control Afghanistan (and its chaos) using strategies of indirect rule. This policy of containment and rule

by proxy appears to be centered on a pro-Western central ruler (supported by Western arms and subsidies) and a loose coalition of local commanders and regional strongmen to exert control in yaghistan (land of rebellion). In a sense, Afghanistan has reverted to its former buffer status on the periphery of more powerful regional states. As long as the US-led War on Terror and rivalry between regional powers such as India and Pakistan or Saudi Arabia and Iran persist, Afghan rulers will continue to accrue geostrategic rents to bolster their power. Competition for power, and national politics more generally, will largely be about the allocation of such rents and the preferential distribution of the largess of patronage to privileged members of the dominant coalition in power.

**Aziz Hakimi**
2016

## References

Anderson, Jon. W. 1978. *"There Are No Khans Anymore: Economic Development and Social Change in Tribal Afghanistan."* Middle East Journal *32 (2):* 167–183.

Atal, Naqib Ahmad, and Zarwali Khoshnood. 2011. *"After the Foreign Troops Leave."* Afghanistan Today, July 28.

Barfield, Thomas. 2010. *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. Princeton University Press.

Barfield, Thomas. "*Afghanistan's Ethnic Puzzle: Decentralizing Power Before the US Withdrawal*." Foreign Affairs, October 2011.

Bertelsen, Bjørn Enge. 2009. "*Multiple Sovereignties and Summary Justice in Mozambique: A Critique of Some Legal Anthropological Terms.*" Social Analysis 53 (3): 123-147.

 Volker, Boege, Bown, Anne, Clements, Kevin and Nolan, Ana. 2009. "*Building Peace and Political Community in Hybrid Political Orders*." International Peacekeeping 16 (5): 599-615.

Carter, L., and Connor, K.  1989. *A Preliminary Investigation of Contemporary Afghan Councils*. Peshawar, Pakistan: ACBAR.

Chandler, David. 2010. "*The Uncritical Critique of 'liberal Peace'*". Review of International Studies 36: 137-55.

Cramer, Christopher, and Goodhand, Jonathan 2002. "*Try Again, Fail Again, Fail Better? War, the State, and the 'Post-Conflict' Challenge in Afghanistan*." Development and Change 33 (5): 885-909.

Dorronsoro, Gilles. 2005. Revolution Unending: Afghanistan 1979 to the Present. C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd.

Dorronsoro, Gilles.  2012. "*The Transformation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Border*." In: Under the Drones: Modern Lives in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Borderlands, ed. Shahzad Bashir and Robert D. Crews. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press.

Duffield, Mark. 2010. "*Risk-Management and the Fortified Aid Compound: Everyday Life in Post-Interventionary Society*." Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding 4 (4): 453-474.

Edwards, David B. 2002. Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad. University of California Press.

Edwards, David B. 2010. "*Counter-insurgency as a Cultural System*." Small Wars Journal (December 27).

Filkins, Dexter. 2012. "*After America: Will Civil War Hit Afghanistan When the US Leave*." The New Yorker, July 9.

Foschini, Fabrizio. 2011. "*How Outside Interference Politicised the Achin Land Conflict.*" AAN.

Giustozzi, Antonio. 2009. Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan. Columbia University Press.

Giustozzi, Antonio. 2011. "*Armed Politics in Afghanistan.*" In: The Peace in Between: Post-conflict Violence and Peacebuilding, ed. Mats Berdal and Astri Suhrke. Routledge.

Gonzalez, Roberto J. 2009. "*Going 'tribal': Notes on Pacification in the 21st Century.*" Anthropology Today 25 (2) (April): 15-19.

Goodhand, Jonathan. 2004. "*From War Economy to Peace Economy? Reconstruction and State Building in Afghanistan.*" Journal of International Affairs 58 (1).

Goodhand, Jonathan. 2009. "*Bandits, Borderlands and Opium Wars: Afghan State-building Viewed from the Margins.*" DIIS Working Paper 26. Danish Institute for International Studies.

Goodhand, Jonathan, and David Mansfield. 2010. "*Drugs and (Dis) order: a Study of the Opium Economy, Political Settlements and State-building in Afghanistan.*" Crisis States Working Papers. London: LSE.

Gregory, Derek. 2008. "*The Rush to the Intimate': Counter-insurgency and the Cultural Turn in Late Modern War.*" Radical Philosophy 150 (July/August).

Grissom, Adam. 2010. "*Making It up as We Go Along: State-building, Critical Theory and Military Adaptation in Afghanistan.*" Conflict, Security & Development 10 (4): 493-517.

Gusterson, Hugh. 2007. "*Anthropology and Militarism.*" Annual Review of Anthropology 36 (1): 155-175.

Hanifi, Jamil M. 2011. "*Review Essay: Vending Distorted Afghanistan Through Patriotic 'anthropology'.*" Critique of Anthropology 31 (3): 161-84.

Hanifi, Shah Mahmoud. 2011. Connecting Histories in Afghanistan: Market Relations and State Formation on a Colonial Frontier. Stanford University Press.

Haroon, Sana. 2007. Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland. Columbia University Press.

Hopkins, Benjamin D. 2008. The Making of Modern Afghanistan. Palgrave Macmillan.

Hopkins, Benjamin D. 2011. "*Managing 'Hearts and Minds': Sandeman in Baluchistan.*" In: Fragments of the Afghan Frontier, by Magnus Marsden and Benjamin D. Hopkins. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hopkins, Benjamin D, and Magnus Marsden. 2011. "*Ten Years In, Afghan Myths Live On.*" The New York Times, October 7.

Horton, Scott. 2010. "*Afghanistan: Six Questions for Thomas Barfield.*" Harper's Magazine.

HRW. 2011. Just Don't Call It a Militia: Impunity, Militias and the Afghan Local Police. New York: Human Rights Watch.

Hughes, Michael. 2011. "*All Politics Is Local in Afghanistan.*" Examiner.com.

Jawad, Khalil. 2011. "*Is the 'Bulldozer' Running Out of Fuel?*" Afghanistan Today.

Jones, Seth G. 2009. "*Going Local: The Key to Afghanistan - The US's Strategy of Building a Centralized State Is Doomed to Fail in a Land of Tribes*", August 7.

Kaplan, Fred. 2010. "*A New Plan for Afghanistan: Less Counter-insurgency, More Killing and Capturing.*" Slate.

Keen, David. 2012. Useful Enemies: When Waging Wars Is More Important Than Winning Them. Yale University Press.

Khalili, Laleh. 2010. "*The New (and Old) Classics of Counter-insurgency.*" Middle East Report 255.

Kilcullen, David. 2009. The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One. Scribe Publications.

Klein, Janet. 2011. The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone. Stanford University Press.

Ledwidge, Frank. 2009. "*Justice and Counter-insurgency in Afghanistan.*" The RUSI Journal Vol. 154 (1): 6-9.

Lefèvre, Mathieu. 2012. "*The Afghan Public Protection Program in Wardak (October 2008 to July 2010).*" In: Snapshots of an Intervention: The Unlearned Lessons of Afghanistan's Decade of Assistance (2001-11), ed. Martine Van Bijlert and Sari Kouvo. Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network.

Lieven, Anatol. 2012. "*Our War Against the Pashtuns.*" NYRblog.

Lindholm, Charles. 1980. "*Images of the Pathan: The Usefulness of Colonial Ethnography.*" European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes De Sociologie 21 (02): 350-361.

Lund, Christian. 2006. "*Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa.*" Development and Change 37 (4): 685-705.

Marten, Kimberly. 2009. "*The Dangers of Tribal Militias in Afghanistan: Learning from the British Empire.*" Journal of International Affairs Vol. 63 (1): 157-74.

McFate, Montgomery. 2005. "*Anthropology and Counter-insurgency: The Strange Story of Their Curious Relationship*." Military Review (March/April).

Moore, Donald S. 1993. "*Contesting Terrain in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands: Political Ecology, Ethnography, and Peasant Resource Struggles.*" Economic Geography Vol. 69 (No. 4): 380-401.

Mousavi, Sayed Askar. 1998. The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study. Curzon Press.

Mukhopadhyay, Dipali. 2012. Warlords, Strongman Governors, and State Building in Afghanistan. Cambridge University Press.

Nagl, John A. 2005. Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counter-insurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam. University of Chicago Press.

North, D., J. Wallis, and B. Weingast. 2009. Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History. Cambridge University Press.

PI. 2010. "*Afghanistan Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP). Spending Data 2010-2011.*" Public Intelligence.

Richmond, Oliver P. 2010. "*Resistance and the Post-liberal Peace.*" Millennium: Journal of International Studies 38 (3): 665-692.

Rodriguez, David M. 2011. "*Leaving Afghanistan to the Afghans: A Commander's Take on Security.*" Foreign Affairs, October.

Rubin, Barnett R. 1995. The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System. New Haven, London: Yale University Press.

Samimi, Mir Agha. 2011. "*AGO Implicates Qadeer in Drug Smuggling Case.*" PAN.

Shahrani, Nazif M. 1998. "*The Future of the State and the Structure of Community Governance in Afghanistan.*" In: Fundamentalism Reborn?: Afghanistan and the Taliban, ed. William Maley. C. Hurst & Co. Publishers.

Stewart, Rory. 2009. "*The Irresistible Illusion.*" London Review of Books.

Stockman, Farah. 2009. "*Presidential Pardons Nullify Victories Against Afghan Drug Trade.*" The Boston Globe.

Tapper, Richard. 1990. "*Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East.*" In: Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East, ed. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner. London. I.B Tauris & Co. Ltd.

Tilly, Charles. 1992. Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

AZIZ HAKIMI

# CHAPTER FOUR:
# KEY ECONOMIC ISSUES FACING
# THE REGION

- PREAMBLE. ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL
  DEVELOPMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN:
  AN OVERVIEW

  *Anatol Lieven*

- POST 2014: THE REGIONAL DRUG ECONOMY AND ITS
  IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

  *Safiya Aftab*

- AFGHANISTAN: THE GEOPOLITICS OF REGIONAL
  ECONOMIC INTEGRATION. THE EMERGENCE OF
  CHINA AS THE NEW FACILITATOR

  *Masood Aziz*

# PREAMBLE. ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN: AN OVERVIEW

## Anatol Lieven

*Professor at Georgetown University in Qatar
and a visiting professor at King's College London.
He is author of "Pakistan: A Hard Country", among other books*

The most important regional development in recent years has been the victory of the Pakistani army and state over the Pakistani Taliban and their allies, which have been reduced from a widespread insurgency to a savage but limited terrorist movement.

This victory has preserved the Pakistani state, and helped unlock Pakistani participation in China's "One Belt, One Road" strategy for Eurasian infrastructure. Beijing has promised Pakistan $46 billion in investment to create new energy and transport communications between Western China and the Arabian Sea, and to develop Pakistan's struggling energy sector. If implemented, this investment has the potential to transform Pakistan's economy.

This Chinese-backed route however leaves Afghanistan to one side. Plans for Afghanistan to become a major communications route have repeatedly stalled, as a result of the intensifying civil war in Afghanistan, and continuing deep tensions between Pakistan and India. Some degree of India-Pakistan reconciliation is also essential if Afghanistan is to become a major trade route again, since such a route is really only worth developing if it links Russia and Europe via Afghanistan to India as well as Pakistan.

Of perhaps even greater and more sinister importance for Afghanistan is the stalling – perhaps indefinitely – of hopes of developing Afghanistan's minerals and energy reserves, estimated by US experts in 2010 to be worth up to $3 trillion. But that was 2010. Since then, the steep fall in copper prices and the precipitous fall in oil prices have greatly reduced the incentive of international investors to extract these resources, especially given the risks and costs of doing so in the middle of a civil war. With the Chinese economy slowing, Beijing, the biggest prospective investor by far, has put its projects on hold.

This means that for the foreseeable future, the Afghan state will be incapable of raising more than a fraction of the revenues it needs to survive from its own resources, and will therefore continue to be overwhelmingly dependent on military support from the USA and economic aid from the USA and Europe.

The USA has signalled its continued commitment to Afghanistan with the Obama administration's reversal of its previous plans first to end, then radically to reduce the continued presence of US air forces and special forces. This change of course was necessitated by military developments in the autumn and winter of 2015-2016, when the Taliban took Kunduz in the north and several district centres in Helmand. The Afghan National Army only drove them back with the help of US forces.

On the other hand, the deep splits in the Taliban which have emerged as a result of the death of their leader Mullah Omar have led to hopes that they might be weakened sufficiently to accept a peace settlement; and these hopes have also been encouraged by moves for better relations with Pakistan launched by President Ashraf Ghani.

This leads to the twin questions of why the Taliban should seek a settlement when – their divisions notwithstanding – they seem to be making progress on the ground against the state forces; and whether the Afghan state is itself united enough to make a peace offer to the Taliban that any substantial part of that movement could possibly accept and Pakistan is prepared to back.

The deeply problematic power-sharing deal between President Ghani and "Chief Executive" Abdullah brokered by the USA to end the crisis which followed the disputed results of the 2014 elections appears to have left the Afghan government largely paralysed. Moreover, it raises the prospect that if the next elections are not to lead to another potentially disastrous crisis, then either the USA will have to step in to manage yet another deal, or the present arrangement will have to continue and Afghan democracy in effect to be suspended. To all appearances therefore, the Afghan civil war and its regional repercussions still have a long way to run.

# POST 2014: THE REGIONAL DRUG ECONOMY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

## Safiya Aftab

*Independent analyst*

## Context

The history of Afghanistan and what now constitutes Pakistan has been intertwined for centuries.  The last three decades bear testimony to this, as three successive wars in Afghanistan[1] have each had distinct impacts on Pakistan, ranging from increased drug abuse and proliferation of illegal arms, to a growing militant movement that draws inspiration from the Afghan Taliban.

Afghanistan is now entering a critical period, with the imminent withdrawal of ISAF combat forces in 2014, and with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) assuming responsibility for maintenance of security, and law and order over large parts of the country.  Afghanistan is also due to witness a change of guard politically, with presidential elections scheduled for April 2014, which will see the exit of Hamid Karzai, the two-term president who has headed the government since 2001.[2]  It is difficult to make any definitive statements about how events in Afghanistan will proceed post 2014, but possible scenarios include a period of stability following the elections; increased unrest in the south and south-east (albeit with Kabul remaining under the control of a strong central government); or even (in a worse case scenario) a full-fledged civil war like the one seen in the early 1990s.

This paper concerns itself with how the drug trade emanating from Afghanistan, is carried further in Pakistan, and possible impacts of this trade on Pakistan's economy and society.   It looks mainly at opium, heroin and cannabis, as Afghanistan is the lead producer for these drugs, and Pakistan is a key transit country, as well as an end-use destination, in their trafficking.  It also briefly explores the trade in precursors, which are also thought to transit into Afghanistan through Pakistan.  The paper is, of necessity, somewhat speculative in nature, looking as it does at an undocumented trade.  Nevertheless, it provides a basis for understanding the channels through which narcotics trafficking comes to impact the licit economy and can be used to influence key stakeholders.

The paper begins with a brief history of the drug trade in the region over the last few years, and analyses key trends.   It then assesses how drugs have impacted Pakistan's security landscape, its political development, and its licit economy and delineates possible future scenarios.

*Safiya Aftab is an Islamabad-based researcher with degrees in economics and public administration, who has worked extensively with a wide range of development agencies and research institutions. Her work covers economics, governance and political economy issues.*

1. The war against the Soviets (1979 to 1989), the civil war (1992 to 1996), and the insurgency against the ISAF presence (beginning 2001, and intensifying 2006 onwards).
2. Afghanistan's 2004 Constitution precludes Mr. Karzai from seeking a third term of office.

## The Regional Drug Trade

According to the World Economic Forum, the value of the global trade in opium and heroin amounted to about $60 billion in 2011 (WEF 2011, Table 3). A substantial proportion of this trade originates from Afghanistan.

### Production of Opium and Heroin

In 2012, Afghanistan produced 74 percent of the global illicit opium output (UNODC 2013, page 18). Poppy cultivation was carried out over 154,000 hectares of land in the country in 2012 (see Table I). The extent of Afghanistan' dominance in cultivation of the crop can be assessed from the fact that Myanmar, which was the country with the second highest acreage devoted to poppy cultivation, grew the crop on 51,000 hectares in the same year – a third of Afghanistan's total. More recent reports suggest that poppy cultivation has once again hit record levels in 2013, cultivated over 209,000 hectares that year.[3] This is an indictment not only of the Afghan government, but also ISAF forces, who have all but given up on eradication programs in favour of efforts at interdiction of drug trafficking – a more complex task.

Not all of the poppy cultivated in Afghanistan is converted to opium – some of the crop goes to waste or is damaged. Allowing for the fact that some proportion of the crop is not harvested for opium, the UN estimated total opium production at 3700 tons for Afghanistan, and 9 tons for Pakistan in 2012 (UNODC 2013). Estimates for heroin production have to be deduced in a more roundabout fashion. A proportion (the UNODC estimates this at about one-third) of opium production is consumed raw, is converted into morphine, or goes to waste. About 10 percent is estimated to be kept in stock (UNODC 2011). Of the remaining 70 percent that is probably being converted into heroin, the amount of the drug produced depends on the process used and the purity achieved. A commonly used conversion suggests that seven tons of opium yield, on an average, 1 ton of heroin. Using the above ballpark figures, the total heroin produced in Afghanistan in 2012 is estimated to be of the order of 370 tons, while the production of heroin in Pakistan (from opium produced in Pakistan) is estimated at about 0.9 tons (see Table 1).

3. Reuters report dated January 15 2014, "Afghanistan seeks help in drugs fight after opium crop hits record."

| Table 1. Production in Afghanistan and Pakistan | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Opium Production | | Opium that is turned into Heroin | | Heroin production | |
| Year | Afghanistan | Pakistan | Total Global Cultivation | Share of Afghanistan Percent | Afghanistan | Pakistan | Afghanistan | Pakistan | Afghanistan | Pakistan |
| | Hectares | Hectares | Hectares | Percent | Tons | | Tons | | Tons | |
| 1998 | 63674 | 950 | 237819 | 27% | 2693 | 26 | 1885.1 | 18.2 | 269.5693 | 2.6026 |
| 1999 | 90583 | 284 | 216204 | 42% | 4565 | 9 | 3195.5 | 6.3 | 456.9565 | 0.9009 |
| 2000 | 82171 | 260 | 221952 | 37% | 3276 | 8 | 2293.2 | 5.6 | 327.9276 | 0.8008 |
| 2001 | 7606 | 213 | 142094 | 5% | 185 | 5 | 129.5 | 3.5 | 18.5185 | 0.5005 |
| 2002 | 74100 | 622 | 180225 | 41% | 3400 | 5 | 2380 | 3.5 | 340.34 | 0.5005 |
| 2003 | 80000 | 2500 | 168600 | 47% | 3600 | 52 | 2520 | 36.4 | 360.36 | 5.2052 |
| 2004 | 131000 | 1500 | 195940 | 67% | 4200 | 40 | 2940 | 28 | 420.42 | 4.004 |
| 2005 | 104000 | 2438 | 151500 | 69% | 4100 | 36 | 2870 | 25.2 | 410.41 | 3.6036 |
| 2006 | 165000 | 1545 | 201000 | 82% | 5300 | 39 | 3710 | 27.3 | 530.53 | 3.9039 |
| 2007 | 193000 | 1701 | 235700 | 82% | 7400 | 43 | 5180 | 30.1 | 740.74 | 4.3043 |
| 2008 | 157000 | 1909 | 213003 | 74% | 5900 | 48 | 4130 | 33.6 | 590.59 | 4.8048 |
| 2009 | 123000 | 1779 | 185935 | 66% | 4000 | 44 | 2800 | 30.8 | 400.4 | 4.4044 |
| 2010 | 123000 | 1721 | 190662 | 65% | 3600 | 43 | 2520 | 30.1 | 360.36 | 4.3043 |
| 2011 | 131000 | 362 | 207500 | 63% | 5800 | 9 | 4060 | 6.3 | 580.58 | 0.9009 |
| 2012 | 154000 | 382 | 236320 | 65% | 3700 | 9 | 2590 | 6.3 | 370.37 | 0.9009 |

Source: UNODC 2013.

POST 2014: THE REGIONAL DRUG ECONOMY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

**Production of Cannabis**

Cannabis grows wild all over the world, and is widely consumed as a mildly intoxicating herb. Afghanistan became the world's largest producer of cannabis herb in 2010 as per UNODC records (see UNODC 2010), and production has since stabilized. Cannabis resin (or hashish as it is called locally), which is the more potent form of the drug, is produced mainly in Afghanistan and Morocco. Cannabis (the herb) was produced over 12,000 hectares in Afghanistan in 2011 (UNODC 2013), and the country produced about 1300 tons of cannabis resin the same year. There is no record of cannabis resin production in Pakistan.

The UNODC's periodic surveys on cannabis cultivation show that the area under cultivation has remained relatively stable over the last few years. This may be because the crop is generally cultivated every other year, or, by some farmers, at even longer intervals.

**The Heroin Market**

Of the total heroin produced in Afghanistan and Pakistan, only 5 to 7 percent is consumed in these two countries (see UNODC 2011, Table 1). A little over 40 percent of the production originating from Afghanistan is believed to travel south, through Pakistan, to South-east Asia (and then on to Australia), to Iran (and then on to Europe), and Africa. Close to a third travels north through Central Asia to the Russian Federation and the Scandinavian countries, while the remaining goes through Iran to Europe and beyond. In addition to Western Europe, Russia and China are emerging as significant markets for heroin, although the most lucrative markets are further afield, in the US (which has a comparatively small market for Afghan origin heroin) and Australia.

The street price of the drug can range from less than $20 per gram in Pakistan, to $40 - $100 per gram in Western Europe, to almost $400 per gram in Australia, the most lucrative market for heroin traffickers (see UNODC 2011).

Assuming that 40 percent of heroin produced in Afghanistan is trafficked through Pakistan,[4] this would mean that close to 150 tons of heroin found its way into the country in 2012.[5] According to official data, law enforcement agencies seized 10,970 kg, or 10 tons of heroin in Pakistan in 2012 (ANF 2013). The country has an estimated 600,000 to 1.1 million heroin users (UNODC 2013a), and heroin consumption within the country is estimated at an average of 20 tons per year (UNODC 2011). Thus, allowing for seizures, and domestic consumption, a conservative estimate still suggests that Pakistan acts as a transit country for about 120 tons of heroin.

The market value of the 120 tons of heroin that are trafficked through Pakistan and sold internationally is astronomical. Even at a conservative $60 per gram for China, Europe and Africa; and allowing for the fact that a small amount will end up in Australia at a much higher price, the end-user value of the heroin trafficked through Pakistan is just over $8 billion (for calculations, see table II). This, of course, is not the amount received by the network of carriers, managers, and higher order operatives based

**4.** This is an approximation based on numerous UNODC reports, which typically cite the proportion of Afghan opiates being trafficked through Pakistan at 40 to 45 percent. This is thus a conservative estimate.

**5.** This includes 40 percent of the estimated 370 tons produced in Afghanistan, plus the small amount (less than one ton) estimated to be produced in Pakistan.

SAFIYA AFTAB

in Pakistan, who typically make deals with regional suppliers, or hand over consignments at the border or on a port. But even a conservative estimate, using local prices in Pakistan, would indicate that the heroin trade yields revenues of over $1.5 billion a year, or equivalent to a month's worth of Pakistan's legitimate exports as of end 2013.

| Table II: Calculation of Earnings from the Heroin Trade Transiting Through Pakistan | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Tons | Price per gram | Price per ton | Amount earned |
| Total heroin | 371.2709 | | | |
| Going through Pakistan | 149.0489 | | | |
| Seized in pakistan | 10 | | | |
| Consumed in Pakistan | 20 | 10 | 10,000,000 | 200,000,000 |
| For export from Pakistan | 119.0489 | | | |
| Going to Australia | 2.506292632 | 350 | 350,000,000 | 877,202,421 |
| Going to China | 51.37899895 | 60 | 60,000,000 | 3,082,739,937 |
| Going to Europe | 43.86012105 | 70 | 70,000,000 | 3,070,208,474 |
| Going to Africa | 21.30348737 | 60 | 60,000,000 | 1,278,209,242 |
| Total | | | | 8,308,360,074 |

Source: Calculated from data available from UNODC 2013 and UNODC 2011.

### The Cannabis Market

Unlike heroin, cannabis is mainly traded within a smaller region. The bulk of the supply to Western Europe, for instance, is believed to originate from Morocco. Pakistan is both a source and a transit country for cannabis resin trafficking from Afghanistan. With an estimated 3 to 4 million cannabis users (UNODC 2013a), the country has a substantial domestic market. In addition, the drug is also trafficked overseas. There are no reliable estimates of the amount of cannabis trafficked into Pakistan, but the 40 percent benchmark is commonly used to assess flows. Thus if Afghanistan produced 1300 tons of cannabis resin in 2011, it is safe to assume that at least 500 tons found its way into Pakistan. Again, there are no reliable estimates for domestic consumption, which in turn makes it difficult to assess amounts trafficked out of the country.

Although the data on cannabis use and trafficking is sketchy, the revenues generated can be estimated using some simplifying assumptions. Thus, even with the conservative hypothesis that all cannabis that comes in from Afghanistan is consumed locally, the total revenue generated is of the order of $1 billion (assuming a local price of $2 per gram, as supported by anecdotal evidence).

### The Trade in Precursors

The drug trade, as delineated above, is a significant revenue source, but it is supplemented by the trade in precursors, or chemicals typically used to process plant extracts into consumable drugs. Amongst the more lucrative trades on this account is the trade in acetic anhydride, a chemical which is a key ingredient in the process of converting morphine base into heroin. While other chemicals are also used in the process, the trade in acetic anhydride is significant because use of the chemical is restricted under regulations of the International Narcotics Control Board.

In order to produce the 370 MT of heroin that was likely produced in Afghanistan in 2012, up to 1000 tons (or about 1 million liters) of acetic anhydride are estimated to have been required.[6] Afghanistan does not legally import the chemical (which is used primarily in the pharmaceuticals industry, as well as in the manufacture of plastics and paint, synthetic fibres and perfume). Given that the bulk of heroin production is believed to take place inside Afghanistan, acetic anhydride is obviously smuggled into the country in large quantities.

A liter of legally imported acetic anhydride would normally cost about $1, but when it is smuggled into Afghanistan, its price can increase manifold to something of the order of $350 per liter (UNODC 2011). The profit from the diversion of licitly imported acetic anhydride to illicit uses is thus considerable. The total sale value of the acetic anhydride being used in Afghanistan is of the order of $200 million to $350 million.

Most of the chemical being used in Afghanistan is thought to originate in China and India, which are the key regional manufacturers. It is then smuggled into Afghanistan through Pakistan and Iran, typically in the form of mis-labeled consignments. Some quantities entering Pakistan legitimately for use in Pakistani manufacturing industry is also thought to be diverted to Afghanistan. However, this latter amount is probably quite low, as Pakistan's legitimate import of acetic anhydride has been falling over the years, from about 200,000 kg in 2005 to barely 5000 kg in 2011.[7] Pakistan is, however, thought to be the main transit country for smuggling of Chinese manufactured acetic anhydride into Afghanistan.

## Trafficking Routes

The bulk of opium produced in Afghanistan is cultivated in the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand, and enters Pakistan through the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) and Balochistan. Trafficking through the restive FATA region is believed to have intensified over the last decade, given the retreat of the political administration and the general lassitude of law enforcement agencies (LEAs) who have lost ground in the wake of repeated military operations in the area. The proliferation of unofficial border crossings in FATA, and the strong familial and economic linkages amongst the tribespeople, who are known to move across the border with impunity, only makes the transport of contraband easier.[8]

Trafficking from Afghanistan to Pakistani Balochistan is believed to take place through the Afghan provinces of Helmand and Nimroz to the Pakistani districts of Chaghi and Nushki. Here, the trafficking is facilitated not so much by cross-border familial links (although these exist), as by the remoteness and inaccessibility of these scantily populated regions. Once again, while there is only one official border crossing in Balochistan, in the town of Chaman near the provincial capital of Quetta, the border region is indifferently policed and easily traversed. Once in Pakistan, opium and heroin are normally stocked in border villages for a period of time before being sent to markets in major cities or on to international

6. See UNODC's 2010 edition of the World Drug Report, which, on page 44, mentions this figure for heroin production of 380 MT.
7. Data obtained from UN Comtrade database at: http://comtrade.un.org
8. Tribesmen living within 10 km of the Pak-Afghan border were always legally allowed to cross the border without travel documents, upon showing proof of residence. In January 2013, the Government of Pakistan stipulated that this concession be withdrawn and that everyone crossing into Afghanistan through the official border crossings must carry travel documents. Although this condition is officially still in place, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is rarely enforced.

SAFIYA AFTAB

markets. Stocks are normally maintained in houses, where household members are often compensated for providing the service.

Data on seizures is made available by Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and is reported by agency/institution or provincial police force responsible for having effected the seizure. The data provides an interesting insight into the relative effectiveness of LEAs. Thus in 2012, the Frontier Corps (FC) in Balochistan was responsible for 71 percent of heroin, 86 of opium and 10 percent of hashish seizures in the country (ANF 2013). The Punjab Police was a distant second, with 14 percent of heroin, and 2 percent of opium seizures. The Police in KP seized about a quarter of the total hashish intercepted in the country in 2012, but seizures of heroin and opium in the province did not amount to much. The ongoing militancy in KP and FATA may account for this disparity, with the data highlighting the increasing marginalization of civilian law enforcement in the region. But Balochistan too has been restive, with a growing separatist movement in the central and southern regions of the province, where trafficking is known to occur. However, unlike in FATA where the military has taken the lead in anti-militancy operations, in Balochistan the FC remains the most powerful force. As such, it remains active on many fronts.

A small proportion of the drugs smuggled into Pakistan are trafficked onward through Balochistan into Iran, from where it moves further west, while some is consumed domestically as indicated earlier. The bulk of the consignments, however, head for Pakistan's air and seaports, destined for China, South East Asia, Africa and Europe. While a proportion of the consignment for China is believed to be trafficked through land, via Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region, seizures at China's seaports two years ago indicated that the maritime route is key for trafficking into the urban centers of China in addition to other destinations (UNODC 2011).

**The Supply Chain**

The bulk of opium production and its further processing into morphine and/or heroin is believed to take place inside Afghanistan, in makeshift factories clustered along border areas. The processing of cannabis on the other hand occurs in both Afghanistan and the FATA region of Pakistan, with the plant first being processed into a powdery substance known as *garda*, and then being processed into a more compressed form known locally as *charas*.

In Pakistan, the first-stage beneficiaries of the drug trade are the "mules" or carriers of drugs from Afghanistan to Pakistan, and the manufacturers of *garda* and *charas* in Pakistan. The carriers are typically paid a negligible amount, and very often, are not aware of the contents of their consignment. Carriers entering Balochistan from Afghanistan typically operate on foot, or using donkeys, horses or livestock which can traverse the rocky terrain. Passage of drugs through mechanized transport is relatively rare here since the border area is largely a no-man's land with few discernible tracks. Carriers entering FATA, go mainly through the Mohmand, Bajaur and Khyber Agencies, with the last

one being particularly notorious for the presence of several high-profile dealers. Here, as in Balochistan, drugs are transported through mountain passes on livestock or by foot, but the official border crossing of Torkham is also believed to be heavily utilized for transportation of larger consignments, with parcels being concealed in crates of fruit, sacks of agricultural produce and even in specially carved out cavities in vehicles.

Once the drugs enter Pakistan, they are typically stored in small amounts in private homes, often in remote villages. It is at this stage that the involvement of the organized traffickers begins, as the households who are involved in storage often include a few members who are more closely involved in the drug trade, often as transporters or low-level henchmen working with bigger players. The more prominent actors rarely keep drug consignments on their premises, but prefer to pay a small fee to the households who assent to lend their homes for storage purposes.

Stored stocks are transported to markets or for further trafficking overseas in small consignments. Heroin is believed to be transported, concealed, in smaller vehicles, while opium or more often hashish are transported in more bulky consignments, often utilizing larger vehicles such as trucks or oil tankers, which have been altered to concel the contraband. Transportation overland in Balochistan is typically more brazen, given the remoteness and low population density in the Baloch hinterland. In general, at this stage, the operation becomes more complex, and also more lucrative for those involved; covering transportation, bribing of LEA officials at every level (from the guards who man inter-provincial checkposts to mid-level or senior officials who are expected to turn a blind eye); recruitment of skilled packers; and recruitment of agents who can get consignments onto airborne or maritime vessels. A significant amount of trafficking also takes place through small towns on the Makran coast, where small boats evade Coast Guards to carry consignments into the high seas, for loading onto larger vessels.

**Institutional Framework**

Law and order is a provincial subject in Pakistan according to the Constitution of 1973, but border security and immigration issues are dealt with by the central government. The federal government also employs close to 200,000 paramilitary personnel in a range of agencies which operate under the aegis of the Ministry of Interior (rather than the Ministry of Defence) and as such are not counted when the country's military capability is discussed. Although the functions of these forces are primarily to be carried out in support of military operations, they have been used, in recent years, for a range of law enforcement duties, including maintaining the peace in the country's largest city, Karachi. The key agencies, in addition to the police, who have the mandate for action against drug smuggling are listed as follows.

The following are agencies controlled by the federal government:

*Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF):* The ANF is the lead drug trafficking control agency in Pakistan. It was established in 1995, and has the

primary responsibility of interdicting the production, trafficking and abuse of narcotics. The ANF maintains systems for collecting intelligence on drug traffickers (including maintaining a fund for informers), and its personnel are trained to conduct raids and effect drug seizures internally as well as on ports. The Force has powers to investigate and prosecute offenders, and has the authority to confiscate assets of drug traffickers.

*Pakistan Customs:* Pakistan Customs, like similar agencies all over the world, is mandated to stop the movement of contraband goods across borders. In Pakistan, Customs has specialized drug units located at international seaports and airports, and officers manning these units are trained to detect concealed drugs.

*Pakistan Coast Guard (PCG):* The Coast Guard, established in 1971, is responsible for littoral patrolling of Pakistan's coastline, and for the security of the coastal region. The Guard, which works under the Ministry of Interior, operates along the coastline, and within a limit of 12 nautical miles. Once again, senior posts are held by officers of the Pakistan Army. The Coast Guard is supposed to prevent illegal migration out of or into the country, as well as interdict smugglers and drug traffickers. It has powers to carry out seizures, arrests and investigation when required.

*Maritime Security Agency (MSA):* The MSA was formed in 1987, and is a paramilitary force operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Defence. Unlike the Coast Guard, the MSA's senior ranks are peopled by serving officers of the Pakistan Navy. It is the only LEA operating in the deep seas, as it has the mandate to patrol Pakistan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which extends up to 200 nautical miles off the coast. Amongst other functions, the MSA is supposed to counter drug trafficking, and can intercept vessels believed to be carrying drugs within the limits of the EEZ.

*Frontier Corps (FC):* The FC was created in 1907, and consists of two sub-divisions, one each for the provinces of KP and Balochistan. The Corps is a paramilitary reserve force which is supposed to assist LEAs in regulating Pakisan's international borders. With a force of about 100,000 the Corps is a key player in the two provinces where it is active. The rank and file of the Corps is recruited primarily from the tribal area, but senior posts are held by serving officers of the Pakistan Army who are seconded to serve in the Corps for a tenure of two or three years. The FC is authorized to combat the smuggling and trafficking of drugs and other contraband, as well as arms and ammunition, explosives etc.

*Pakistan Rangers:* The Rangers, established in 1942 in Sindh, are a paramilitary force which is controlled by the Ministry of Interior. The force also has two sub-divisions, one each in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh. Unlike the Frontier Corps, the Rangers are not concerned with border security as much as internal security – they are deployed primarily to maintain law and order and provide security in areas of conflict. In 2004, the Rangers added an Anti-Terrorist Force to their ranks. Once again, key senior positions in the Force are manned by serving officers of the Pakistan Army who are seconded to the force for a fixed tenure.

*Federal Investigation Agency (FIA):* The FIA is the prime investigative

agency in Pakistan, and is responsible for investigating not only national but also transnational crimes in which Pakistanis are involved, or which affect the country. The agency operates all over the country, and overseas (through Immigration Wings in embassies). It does not have the authority to operate in the FATA region, however. Senior positions in the Agency are held by officers of the police service.

The following are provincial LEAs who have a role in control of drug trafficking:

*Police Service of Pakistan:* As mentioned earlier, the police is a provincial service in Pakistan, although senior police officers are members of the federal civil service. The police forces have the conventional role of all such forces across the world, but they do not function in the FATA region.

*Frontier Constabulary:* Not to be confused with the Frontier Corps, the Constabulary was established in 1913 to patrol the border between FATA and the then North West Frontier Province (now KP). Although under the administrative control of the federal Ministry of Interior, operational direction to the Constabulary comes from provincial Home Departments. The senior hierarchy of the force is staffed by members of the police service. The Constabulary was originally established to prevent incursions from the tribal area into so-called "settled" districts.[9] Its functions are similar today, but it also has a role in checking the smuggling of narcotics from the tribal area.

*Levies and Khassadars:* The Levies are a special police force found in FATA and parts of Balochistan, who are responsible for policing in tribal areas and carrying out law and order functions under political agents (civil servants responsible for administration in FATA), and district coordination officers (civil servants responsible for district administration in parts of Balochistan). Created by the British more than a century ago (in fact, soon after the uprising of 1857), the Levies function as a "home-grown" police force, consisting of local recruits who are supposed to be aware of the sensitivities of their area.

The *khassadars* are a similar force, introduced in 1921, and consisting of local recruits working FATA who have the responsibility to patrol roads and maintain law and order. Unlike the Levies, the *khassadars* are appointed in consultation with tribal elders, and are recruited in a system where each tribe of the area has a fixed quota in the total *khassadar* force of the region. The *khassadar*'s entry into the force is approved by local tribal leaders, although they are paid a non-pensionable nominal salary by the government. *Khassadars* carry their own weapons as opposed to government issued arms, and can pass on the job to their heirs, if approved by a tribal chief.

**Legislative and Policy Framework**

The key legislation that covers drug related offences includes the following:

*Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) 1901:* Under Article 247 of the 1973 Constitution, the FATA region, as the names implies, is administered by the federal government. Further, no act of Parliament

**9.** The term refers to the practice of carrying out land settlements and determining the sizes of land parcels, as well as ownership in the regions of British India. Such an exercise was not carried out in tribal areas.

SAFIYA AFTAB

applies to the region, unless expressly allowed by the President. In effect, FATA is governed by the FCR, the regulation enacted in 1901 by the British to control the tribes. The FCR is a draconian law, which gives unprecedented powers to Political Agents, civil servants who administer tribal agencies. Residents of FATA do not have the right of appeal against decisions taken by the Agent, nor do they have a right to legal representation or the right to present reasoned evidence. It also allows the federal government to seize private property without assigning a reason, restrict movement of individuals into and out of the agencies, and carry out collective punishment wherein an entire tribe can be punished (often through demolition of houses) for the actions of a select few.[10] As such, if the authorities so desired, they are authorized to take drastic action against drug smugglers at least in the FATA region.

There have been numerous calls for the abolition of the FCR in Pakistan's history, not least from domestic and international human rights groups; and successive political governments have announced their intention to carry out such an exercise. However, the law remains very much in place. The extension of the Political Parties Order to Tribal Areas in August 2011 was a promising development, given that political parties were previously not allowed to campaign in the region. However, sending representatives to parliament, when parliament cannot legislate on FATA, is a meaningless exercise.

*Control of Narcotics Substances (CNS) Act, 1997:* The Act prohibits the cultivation, production, manufacturing, extraction, preparation, transportation, possession, trade, financing and trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic or controlled substances except for scientific, industrial or medical purposes. It is the key legislation used against drug trafficking, and is a comprehensive legislation.

*Anti- Money Laundering (AML) Act 2010:* The AML Act created the institutional structure and provided the legislative basis for monitoring financial systems to detect money laundering, and then prosecute offenders. The Act resulted in the establishment of a Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) at the State Bank which aims to counter money laundering and financing of terrorism in Pakistan. The Act also required the FMU to specify procedures for financial transactions, and to report suspicious transactions to the authorities, a requirement that was met with the issuance of such procedures soon after the formation of the FMU. The Unit does not have the authority to take action against suspected offenders. It is required to forward information to relevant investigation agencies (in case of transactions involving drugs, this would be the FIA), who can then investigate and prosecute.

In spite of the fact that an institutional structure has been in place for over three years, little progress has been made in Pakistan when it comes to actually investigating or prosecuting money laundering. The country regularly appears on the list of countries, issued by the inter-governmental Financial Action Task Force (FATF), who are required to do more to fulfil international requirements of the regulation of money laundering.

Other more general legislation which covers smuggling includes the Customs Act of 1969 which lays out processes and procedures

**10.** For a more detailed discussion on the key features of the FCR, and some of the recent amendments to it, see Rumi 2012.

for investigation of and punishments for those violating Customs requirements; and the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement of 2010 which lays out procedures for Afghanistan's use of Pakistan's ports for trade purposes.

*Anti-Narcotics Policy 2010:* The Anti-Narcotics Policy of 2010 was formulated to improve coordination amongst the various agencies responsible for drug control. It was under this policy that an Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for Narcotics Control was established, under the overall supervision of the ANF. In general, the policy aims to strengthen and build the capacities of existing national law enforcement institutions, develop an effective coordination and control mechanism, increase inter-agency and international cooperation and mobilize the people of Pakistan to refuse the use of drugs. The policy talks about both supply and demand side drug control measures, and recognizes that international cooperation is fundamental if Pakistan's drug control efforts are to be successful.

That substantial funds are being generated through the drug trade is unquestionable. But it is important to try and understand the possible uses of these funds, and the channels through which the money can be brought into play. The next few sections of this paper examine this question.

## Ramifications of the Drug Trade

Commodity trade of the magnitude associated with drugs is bound to have far-reaching effects. The proceeds of the operation benefit a range of stakeholders from international traffickers, to families of carriers living in remote border regions. At the same time, the proceeds of the drug trade may show up in real estate transactions (in Pakistan, or by Pakistani nationals in other parts of the world), in the stock market, in the market for consumer durables such as cars, or in the form of undercover payments to policymakers, public functionaries or even members of the judiciary. Each of these avenues has a distinct set of impacts on the larger economy.

### Beneficiaries

A recent study suggests that poppy growing farmers in Afghanistan earned $1.4 billion in 2012, a fraction of the proceeds of the global opium and heroin trade (EWI 2013). However, profits from the drug trade increase exponentially as deals take place further and further away from the place of origin. For those at the lower end of the supply chain in Pakistan, i.e. the carriers (or mules) and the households who store processed or partially processed supplies, remuneration is probably lower than than Rs. 10000 ($90) or so per month.[11] Given that the average monthly household income for the lowest quintile in KP was estimated at about Rs. 13000 in 2011, while in Balochistan this was close to Rs. 11000 (HIES 2011), the sum mentioned would be substantial compensation. But compensation grows along the supply chain, with major drug lords, who arrange for the transportation of consignments from the border areas to ports and beyond, estimated to be earning milions of dollars. Most of that wealth is maintained in offshore accounts, but some of it filters back into the Pakistani economy through channels discussed below.

**11.** UNODC 2011 reports that truck drivers transporting concealed heroin pay assistants Rs. 3000 per month or less.

SAFIYA AFTAB

**301**

At the lowest level, storage and transportation of drugs provides substantial, regular income in the western border regions where only subsistence agriculture is prevalent, employment opportunities are few, and the possibility of establishing lucrative, legitimate businesses is minimal, given the low spending capacity of the local population. At a higher level, the marketing and smuggling of drugs is far more lucrative than legitimate businesses. The attraction of the trade is enhanced by the fact that Pakistan has a poor record on prosecution and conviction of drug dealers. Crime statistics published by the Ministry of Interior's Bureau of Police Research do not even include drug trafficking (see PSY 2012 and other issues of the same publication), while convictions of big drug lords are few and far between, and often determined by political differences rather than criminal activity. Data on prisons shows that about 8 percent of the prison population in 2010 was held for drug trafficking (see NAPA 2010), but anecdotal evidence suggests that most of these are drug users who fall afoul of the law, rather than major league traffickers. As such, in a society with limited economic opportunities and weak deterrence, the drug trade finds many takers.

Evidence from Afghanistan suggests that the drug dealers there initially operated through loosely structured outfits that on occasion cooperated with each other. More recent studies concluded, however, that these groups were moving toward vertical integration, with organized crime networks increasingly involved in the business (see Shaw, 2006). There is no definitive assessment of how the trade is organized in Pakistan, but it is likely that the trade remains in the hands of loosely structured small groups, and has not as yet consolidated into a mafia-type structure. If the trade grows, however, consolidation of groups is likely to result.

**Public Health Impacts**

According to UNODC's latest survey, almost 6.5 million in Pakistan between the ages of 15 and 64 had used illicit drugs over a 12 month period from 2011 to 2012 (UNODC 2013a). Of these, just over 4 million had admitted to the use of cannabis, while about 813,000 had used heroin, and 345,000 had used opium in a relatively unprocessed form.[12] There are significant regional disparities in the use of drugs – in KP, 11 percent of the population were estimated to have used illicit substances over the year in question, while the proportion was 5.1 percent for Balochistan, 6.5 percent for Sindh, and 4.8 percent for Punjab.

In terms of international prevalence rates, Pakistan is still on the lower end of drug use for "soft" drugs. Cannabis, for example, is estimated to be used by about 2 percent of the population as compared to over 8 percent of the population in North America, parts of Europe (mainly France, Spain and Italy), and Brazil (see Annex I Maps in UNODC 2013). But in terms of heroin use, the country has amongst the highest prevalence rates in the world with over 1 percent of the population aged 15 to 64 estimated to have used the drug. Similar high rates exist in only a few other countries, notably Russia, the US and Australia.

The use of opium in raw form, and cannabis in the form of *charas*, has a long history in the sub-continent. But the use of heroin dates largely from the 1980s, during Afghanistan's war against the Soviets, when the

**12.** See Table 1 of UNODC 2013a.

drug came to be trafficked through Pakistan as part of an effort to fund the Mujahideen. As such, the rise of heroin use in Pakistan has been swift and excessive.

The dangers of drug use prevalence in Pakistan are compounded by the prevalence of high risk behaviour amongst addicts. Heroin, for example, is most likely to be consumed through injecting, and the UNODC reports that 73 percent of those who inject the drug report sharing syringes (UNODC 2013a). Only 11 percent of those who inject drugs had ever accessed a treatment center, and less than 2 percent reported having been tested for HIV/AIDS.

High risk sexual behaviour is also closely linked with drug use, as addicts are likely to resort to selling sexual favours in exchange for a supply of drugs. Although Pakistan has low rates of HIV prevalence for the adult population as a whole (less than 0.1 percent according to the National AIDS Control Program), prevalence amongst injecting drug users is estimated at more than 5 percent as per official records.[13] UNAIDS, however, estimates prevalence amongst injecting drug users at a much more alarming 27 percent (see UNODC 2013a). Prevalence rates for hepatitis B and C are already extremely high in Pakistan – according to one report, 10 percent of the population is infected.[14] Once again, injecting drug users are at considerable risk of contracting these viruses.

Pakistan is ill-equipped to handle the public health issues associated with drug use. There are only 96 structured drug treatment clinics in the country, of which only 25 are run by the government and are available free or at minimal cost (UNODC 2013a). All available centers taken together have the capacity to treat at the most, about 30,000 patients annually. Many of the existing centers are poorly equipped and do not have specialized staff. As such, drug usage has dire consequences for most addicts and their families.

## Impacts on the Real Estate Market

Although the bulk of the earnings of Pakistanis involved in the drug trade are believed to be in offshore accounts, not all the players are based out of the country. Flows from the drug trade are surmised to flow back into the licit economy fairly easily, not least due to the lack of regulation of key sectors of investment.

An obvious example is the real estate market. The purchase and sale of property in Pakistan is governed by the Transfer of Property Act 1882, with other laws such as the Stamp Act 1899 and the Registration Act 1908 also being relevant for transactions. The system of buying property is fairly complex when it comes to ensuring that all government duties and taxes have been paid, and more important, that the sale deed is registered with the relevant authorities. However, buyers do not need to produce any personal documentation other than national identity cards. In particular, they do not need to have a national tax number or any proof of being a taxpayer. In small towns, rural areas and even in certain housing societies in large cities, payments can be made in cash rather than by bank draft – dealers excuse this practice on the grounds that access to financial services is limited in Pakistan, and the requirement of

13. See data at: http://www.nacp.gov.pk

14. Statement by Head of Community Medicine at CMH Lahore Medical College on World Hepatitis Day 2013. As reported in The News, July 27, 2013: http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-192589-18m-hepatitis-patients-in-Pakistan

SAFIYA AFTAB

payment through the formal banking system has to be circumvented if the real estate market is to flourish. Whatever the reason for the lack of documentation, the sector lends itself to money laundering.

It is difficult to estimate the flow of undocumented funds into real estate market, but some characteristics of the market in Pakistan do point to such an eventuality. First, real estate prices in Pakistan, particularly in big cities, do not respond to economic fundamentals – typically, property prices in certain cities (notably Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore) and high end localities in particular, continue to increase year by year at rates well beyond the rate of growth of GDP. In countries where financial markets are developed, and mortgages are the preferred method of housing finance, such bubbles are created by financial policy. But in Pakistan, where property purchases are generally financed by savings or family loans, there is no credible reason for such bubbles to occur.

Second, there is no comparison between median incomes and median property prices in the country. Price to income ratios for housing in Pakistan are routinely estimated at 15 to 18 percent in cities, whereas in New York City, the ratio is closer to 10 percent.[15] Financing property purchases in Pakistan, at least in major cities, through legitimate, taxed income seems to be almost impossible for the average citizen.

Third, the over-valuation of property is also apparent in the rent-value ratio. In general, the rent of a property is set at or close to 0.5 percent of the market value. In Pakistan, average rents are closer to 0.3 percent, showing that rents do not keep up with the increase in property prices.

While not all of the over-valuation in the real estate market can be attributed to drug related inflows, the unregulated nature of the market, specifically its ability to bypass formal banking systems, does point to it being a safe haven for drug trafficking proceeds.

The urban sprawl evident in Pakistan, as prospective property buyers are forced further and further out of city centers in a quest for affordable property is certainly indicative of the extent of black money in the economy. Such real estate markets not only encourage speculation, but also serve to channel legitimate investable funds into non-productive uses. Further, given the Pakistani government's inability to effectively tax transactions, the increased investment in real estate robs the government of revenue that may have been forthcoming had funds found their way into more productive and better documented sectors.

**Impacts on Corruption and Rent Seeking**

Pakistan consistently ranks amongst the 50 most corrupt countries in the world, as per Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. A National Corruption Perception Survey carried out by the same organization in 2011 indicated that the Land Revenue Department and Police were viewed as the two most corrupt public departments in the country (TI-P 2011). The police in fact has consistently appeared in the top three most corrupt departments since the survey was initiated in 2002. Although Pakistan has enacted anti-corruption legislation on a number of occasions, dating from the late 1940s, and has established

**15.** See property investment sites such as www.numbeo.com

a succession of anti-corruption organizations (the current one being the National Accountability Bureau), anti-corruption efforts are generally perceived to be politically motivated, and do not carry credibility.

There is little doubt that key figures in the drug business have used resources and influence to back certain political parties, or if not the party as a whole, certain electoral candidates. Or they have been members of the national and/or provincial legislatures themselves.  The most commonly cited examples come from Balochistan and FATA.  A Pakistani national popularly known as Imam Bheel, who was named by President Obama in 2009 as a Significant Foreign Narcotics Trafficker under the Kingpin Act is believed to be a key financier of a leading political party in Balochistan (see Green, 2012).[16]  In fact,  the party, which has a leadership cadre composed of educated, middle class professionals, in stark contrast to most political parties in the country, is now in power in the province.  Another well known personality from the Khyber Agency in FATA, who had served a jail sentence on drug charges in the US, and whose property was seized by the ANF under a Supreme Court order in 2006, had remained a member of parliament from FATA under two political governments in the 1990s.[17]

While it is difficult to point out exactly how drug funds may have been used to influence public policy, a nexus between drug lords and public representatives is an undesirable one.  This is particularly true in an environment where some of the earnings from drug trafficking have undoubtedly been used to diversify into legitimate businesses. Pakistan is known to have powerful economic lobbies who influence governments to enact amendments in the annual Finance Bill.  The Bill, which prescribes how taxation measures are to be carried out, is often undermined through the issuance of statutory orders, known as SROs, that specify exemptions to the taxation policy in different sectors. International financial institutions have expressed their reservations about the issuance of such orders, and the IMF has in fact stipulated a cessation of SROs as one of the conditionalities for its ongoing Extended Fund Facility.  However, such efforts to counter lobbying groups can be nullified if more money is poured into the system and used to influence public policymaking.  Proceeds from crime can also be used to undermine the work of LEAs by inducing personnel into inaction or even complicity.

In short, the flow of funds from such groups to public officials nullifies any attempt at good governance, and should be checked.


## Impacts on the Authority of the State

Pakistan has been described as a failing state, often making an appearance if not in the first ten, then definitely in the first fifteen countries of the Failed States Index issued annually by the Fund For Peace.[18]  Though the ranking can be disputed, Pakistan's status  as a country battling political instability, security troubles and a poor economic outlook makes it vulnerable to the growth of organized crime and related corruption.  The writ of the state has weakened considerably in regions such as FATA, southern KP and southern Balochistan, and the country's largest city and key port, Karachi, has long been the scene of

16. The Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (or the Kingpin Act) was enacted by the US Government in 1999, seeks to identify key players in drug trafficking and deny them access to the US financial system as well as preclude them from forming any legitimate trade links with US entities.
17. For a summary of the career of Haji Ayub Afridi, see WGD 1999.
18. See http://ffp.statesindex.org

SAFIYA AFTAB

ethnic and sectarian strife, gang warfare and criminal activity on the part of sophisticated protagonists, capable of a range of transgressions.

In this environment, the infusion of large sums of money into business, real estate, the stock market or as funds for rent seeking can further undermine the authority of state institutions. In more extreme cases, the growth of organized crime has a direct impact on political stability, as well as on the economy, as the key stakeholders learn to bypass taxation and regulation systems. The government thus loses resources and efficacy necessary to provide security, maintain law and order and provide essential services to citizens.

**Impacts on Foreign Relations**

Pakistan's role as a transit country for international heroin trafficking is coming under increasing scrutiny in the international community. One indicator of this is the quantum of US bilateral assistance for counter narcotics operations – estimated at over $750 million for the period from 2002 to 2011 (Kronstadt, 2011).[19]

Control of trafficking is amongst the topics that feature prominently in Pakistan and India's bilateral talks as part of confidence building measures between the two countries. A recent analysis of documents prepared by Chinese LEAs indicates that the country is increasingly concerned about drug inflows from the Golden Crescent (Iran, Afghanisan, Pakistan), replacing earlier concerns about the Golden Triangle (Tanner, 2011). Further, in a development that is disturbing for Pakistan, the analysis reveals that the Chinese government emphasizes the role of suppliers in exacerbating its drug problems, as opposed to acknowledging deficiencies in its own law enforcement mechanisms. Recent research from Russia points to a similar trend – the Russian government is increasingly concerned about the fact that the country has seen an alarming increase in drug use over the past decade, almost all of which can be attributed to the increase in supply of heroin from Afghanistan (Stepanova 2013). Although the bulk of this supply is going to Russia through Northern Afghanistan and Central Asia, Russia views regional drug trafficking as a serious issue, and a potential destabilizing influence.

So far the international community is emphasizing regional cooperation of LEAs and multilateral drug control agencies to control trafficking in the region. However, an exacerbation of the trade will only increase the scrutiny of the operations of Pakistani LEAs. This may lead to positive outcomes in the longer term, but in the short term, Pakistani authorities will be under pressure to show results.

**Links with Terrorism**

The proceeds of crime are very likely being used to fund the activities of militant groups. The increase in incidents of kidnapping for ransom over the last decade, for example, is directly linked to the rise in militancy, and many high-profile victims, are found to be in the custody of different militant groups. The Taliban in Afghanistan are known to benefit from

**19.** Total of aid under Counter Narcotics programs and programs under the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement agency.

taxes on the drug trade (for details see UNODC 2013). While no such direct linkages have been established in Pakistan as yet, it is inconceivable that militant groups would not use the vast network established for the drug trade in Pakistan to generate revenue, either through a system of taxation (particularly in FATA) or by providing protection to key figures in exchange for compensation. Proceeds from the drug trade are thus very likely to be fueling militancy in Pakistan.

Until recently there was little focus on this in Pakistan. Counter terrorism (CT) efforts in the country were focused on intelligence gathering followed by policing, and, in many cases, undercover operations by military intelligence agencies that are not strictly legal. In the new draft Counter Terrorism strategy, unveiled in June 2013, however, there is an emphasis on the need to trace and neutralize financing mechanisms, and prevent terrorist organizations from raising funds domestically or internationally.

Pakistan's attempts to trace fund flows to terrorists are complicated by the fact that informal value transfer systems (IVTSs), popularly known as *hawala* and *hundi*, are commonly used by Pakistanis living abroad to transfer funds to families back home. In a country where barely 14 percent of adults have access to formal financial institutions (see WB 2009), while a further 40 percent do not access any form of financial services at all, IVTSs provide an important service, in that they reach households in remote parts of the country, and enable the user to circumvent the relatively high service fee, and required paperwork of the banking system. While Pakistan has been under pressure from the international community, particularly the United States, to crack down on IVTSs, the government is reluctant to do so, arguing that the bulk of such transfers are not related to illegal activity, but simply provide a convenient form of funds transfer. It is as yet too early to comment on how this debate will progress, but the likelihood is that Pakistan will find itself increasingly under pressure to regulate informal money transfers, thus indirectly affecting at least the stakeholders at the lower end of the drug trafficking value chain.

## Possible Post 2014 Impacts

The future of the drug trade, as it impacts Pakistan, is closely tied to developments in Afghanistan. As of early 2014, international combat forces are due to withdraw from the country by the end of the year, with possibly a token presence of non-combat forces in place to continue to train security forces.[20] Analysts have put forward a number of possible scenarios of how the situation will unfold. These range from possible cessation of all hostilities and co-option of insurgent forces into a broad-based government; to all-out civil war.

Barring unforeseen developments, what does seem clear is that there will be little or no curtailment of the poppy crop in Afghanistan in the medium term. A broad-based government that co-opts the Taliban and local leadership from the south is unlikely to crack down on a key revenue resource. In the event of a civil war, the possibility of control of poppy cultivation recedes even more, as different warring factions will use the crop to generate funds for the conflict.

[20]. The exact nature of the post withdrawal arrangements will be clear only when the Bilateral Security Agreement between the governments of Afghanistan and the United States is finalized. This is expected to happen after the Afghan presidential elections of April 2014.

SAFIYA AFTAB

Pakistan's position as a destination and transit country for the Afghan drug trade will place it in an even more vulnerable position in the event of a further expansion in the trade. The spinoffs of the trade in Pakistan include the growth of a criminal network that not only oversees the transit process, as well as domestic sales, but is also very likely to be establishing linkages with militant groups and anti-state elements. A destabilized Pakistan suits all such groups. Thus the proliferation of stakeholders in the drug trade, and an expansion in the influence and power of drug lords has implications not only for the maintenance of law and order, but also for state security.

For all of the reasons mentioned above, it is very much in Pakistan's interest to work with the international community to arrest poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, or at least upgrade its anti narcotics forces to combat passage through its territory. Realistically speaking, though, this is fast becoming impossible given the poor state of governance in the country, the slowdown of the economy in the last five years, and the inability of LEAs to take forceful action against criminal elements. In fact, even a business as usual scenario in Afghanistan, with poppy cultivation leveling off at current levels, may not translate into a business as usual scenario for Pakistan, given the ever diminishing capacity of the LEAs in the latter country. We may be looking at a grim scenario in the medium to longer term, where Afghanistan's narco economy begins to wreak unprecedented havoc in Pakistan.

## Afterword

The paper "The Regional Drug Economy and Its Implications for Pakistan", written in 2014, cites 2012-2013 data, and points out that poppy cultivation in Afghanistan may have hit record levels post 2012. This was subsequently confirmed by the UNODC's World Drug Report 2015, which reports that area covered by poppy cultivation in 2014 had risen to 224,000 hectares, compared to 154,000 in 2012 (per the paper). Oven-dry opium produced in Afghanistan in 2014 is estimated at 5400 tons, compared to 3700 tons in 2012. Going by the assumptions made in the paper with regard to the amount of heroin being consumed in or transiting through Pakistan, this would amount to about 150 tons of heroin transiting through the country, which, at even conservative estimates, should yield revenues of well over $1.2 billion, and very likely much more. Thus the production of opiates has only expanded in the last two years, and shows little signs of abating. Whether or not this translates into increased heroin in markets is uncertain, given that the drug can be stored for long periods.

If, as the data seems to indicate, the trade in opiates is expanding, the longer term effects on Pakistan, which is fighting a well organized and well funded militant movement, could be dire. While the Tehrik e Taliban remains the most active militant group, recent investigations have pointed to the penetration of the Islamic State, or groups sympathetic to the IS, in key urban centers. While the military has mounted a sustained campaign against such groups, its efforts could be hampered by the proliferation of criminal gangs with access to drug-related resources and links to terrorist outfits. Cracking down on the funding of militant groups is one of the elements of Pakistan's National Action Plan against terrorism. This requires specialized expertise in tracking money flows as well as prosecuting offenders. But if the country is to win this war, it must develop and deploy such expertise.

**Safiya Aftab**
2016

## Bibliography

Anti Narcotics Force (ANF). 2013. Data on Performance of IATF. Available on their website: http://www.anf.gov.pk/content/Data3yrs.pdf

East West Institute (EWI). 2013. Afghan Narco-Trafficking: A Joint Threat Assessment. Policy Report 2013-1.

Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO). 2011. ISAF Container Scam. Report prepared in response to a request by the Supreme Court of Pakistan vide suo moto Case No. 16/2010.

Green, Matthew. 2012. Pakistan's Elusive Kingpin. Reuters Special Report No. 1. September 5. Karachi/Quetta.

Government of Pakistan/Government of KP/FATA Secretariat/ADB/EU/UNDP/ World Bank. 2010. Post Crisis Needs Assessment (PCNA): KP and FATA.

Gul, Imtiaz. 2010. Pakistan's Lawless Frontier.

Kronstadt, Alan. 2011. Direct Overt U.S. Aid and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002-FY2011. Prepared for the Congressional Research Service.

Ministry of Finance, Economic Advisor's Wing (EAW). 2011. Pakistan Economic Survey 2010-11, Special Section No. 1: Cost of War on Terror for Pakistan's Economy.

Ministry of Finance, Economic Advisor's Wing (EAW). 2012. Pakistan Economic Survey 2011-12.

Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan (MOF). 2013. Budget in Brief 2012-13.

National Academy for Prison Administration (NAPA). 2010. Province Wise Statement of Prisons/Prisoners. Lahore.

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. 2012. Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2010-11. Islamabad.

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. 2012. Pakistan Statistical Yearbook (PSY). Islamabad.

Rumi, Raza Ahmad. 2012. Pakistan: Ungoverned Spaces. CIDOB Policy Research Project. July.

Shaw, Mark. 2006. "Drug Trafficking and the Development of Organized Crime in Post Taliban Afghanistan," in *Afghanistan's Drug Industry: Structure, Functioning, Dynamics and Implications for Counter-Narcotics Policy*, edited by Doris Buddenberg and William A. Byrd, World Bank and UNODC. November.

Stepanova, Ekaterina. 2013. Russia's Concerns Relating to Afghanistan and the Broader Region in the Context of the US/NATO Withdrawal. CIDOB Policy Research Report. June.

Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). 2011. Examining the dimensions, scale and dynamics of the illegal economy: A study of Pakistan in the region. Report submitted to UNODC. November.

Tanner, Murray Scot. 2011. China Confronts Afghan Drugs: Law Enforcement Views of the Golden Crescent. Center for Naval Analyses, China Division.

Transparency International Pakistan. 2011. National Corruption Perception Survey.

UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC). 2010. Afghanistan Cannabis Survey.

UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC). 2013. World Drug Report.

UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC). 2013a. Drug Use in Pakistan: Technical Summary Report.

UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC). 2011. The Global Afghan Opium Trade: A Threat Assessment. Vienna. July.

World Bank. 2011. Afghanistan Economic Update. October.

World Bank. 2012. Afghanistan in Transition – Looking Beyond 2014. May.

World Bank. 2009. Bringing Finance to Pakistan's Poor: A Study on Access to Finance for the Underserved and Small Enterprises. Washington DC.

World Geopolitics of Drugs (WGD). 1999. Pakistan Country Report. Kluwer Academic Publishers. The Netherlands

| | |
|---|---|
| **AML** | Anti Money Laundering |
| **ANF** | Anti Narcotics Force |
| **ANSF** | Afghan National Security Forces |
| **ATT** | Afghan Transit Trade |
| **BLA** | Baloch Liberation Army |
| **CNS** | Control of Narcotics Substances |
| **COAS** | Chief of Army Staff |
| **EEZ** | Exclusive Economic Zone |
| **FATA** | Federally Administrated Tribal Area |
| **FATF** | Financial Action Task Force |
| **FC** | Frontier Corps |
| **FCR** | Frontier Crimes Regulation |
| **FIA** | Federal Investigation Agency |
| **FMU** | Financial Monitoring Unit |
| **FTO** | Federal Tax Ombudsman |
| **GHQ** | General Headquarters |
| **ISAF** | International Security Assistance Force |
| **IVTS** | Informal Value Transfer System |
| **KP** | Khyber Paktunkhwa |
| **LEA** | Law Enforcement Agency |
| **MDTF** | Multi Donor Trust Fund |
| **MSA** | Maritime Security Agency |
| **MPA** | Member of the Provincial Assembly |
| **NLC** | National Logistics Cell |
| **NWFP** | North West Frontier Province |
| **PCG** | Pakistan Coast Guard |
| **PCNA** | Post Crisis Needs Assessment |
| **PPP** | Pakistan People's Party |
| **SAFRON** | States and Frontier Regions |
| **TTP** | Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan |
| **UNODC** | UN Office of Drugs and Crime |

# AFGHANISTAN: THE GEOPOLITICS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION. THE EMERGENCE OF CHINA AS THE NEW FACILITATOR

**Masood Aziz**

*Senior diplomat, author and corporate executive*

## Introduction

Once a dormant region, the great span of territories and nations surrounding Afghanistan is now more central to global affairs than ever. Indeed, the geopolitics of the region of Central and South Asia may now help define the future of the 21st century.

At the same time, across these territories, the very nature and character of the political, economic and security currents have been shifting relentlessly. Rather than simply a replay of the old "Great Game", what is transpiring here now may be an undeniable precursor of, and a new window looking forward into, the world's contemporary politics, influencing other parts of the globe.

This dynamic is marked by Russia's retreat, and at the same time, the emergence of China as a new type of *Pax Romana* power. In turn, China's rise is now inexorably re-balancing the interests of both regional and global players such as Russia, India, Europe and the United States. A closer examination of this region reveals that as the West is now hindered by its worst economic crisis since the 1930s, Asia's rise may be reflective of a steadfast ascent and signals a permanent trend pointing to the beginning of an undisputable multipolar world. The military presence of the US and European allies in Afghanistan has defined their engagement in this region for over a decade now. Their efforts were focused on controlling the regional threats impacting Afghanistan and in the process producing economic and social stability. However, despite some advances, Afghanistan's stability is not assured. In particular, the model of intervention pursued by the West in Afghanistan has not produced results in securing its economic growth and its integration within the region. Without assuring Afghanistan's economic stability, the region will remain mired in conflict risking wider instability. What other major force might emerge which would allow for the creation of conditions offering a new dimension of strategic approaches to realising the type of stability, often desired but not attained, and which might act as a positive agent for a more effective regional economic integration?

*Masood Aziz was the senior diplomat at the mission of the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington DC and an executive in institutional investment management. Mr. Aziz is also an author in the recently published book "The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia." His articles have been published in Foreign Policy, Newsweek/The Daily Beast, The Diplomat & Forbes Magazine. He appears frequently on BBC World Service TV & Radio, Al Jazeera English TV, BBC Arabic TV and CNN's GPS/Fareed Zakaria.*

China's rise in the region might just offer such an opportunity. In fact, Beijing's influence in the greater region of Afghanistan has been rapidly increasing over the past two decades. However, to better comprehend China's role within this broader region, one must understand its role as a rising global power.

China's economic growth has been nothing short of historic, rising at about 10% a year for the past 30 years. No other nation of this significance has ever achieved such a feat in human history. China is now the world's largest energy consumer, its largest manufacturer, its largest merchandise exporter, the largest creditor nation; the largest holder of foreign currency; and by new economic measures, China may already have surpassed the United States as the largest economy in the world. Economic power of this scale is inevitably followed by a rise in political and military power. Although not assured for China as of yet, history is a witness in this regard. After World War II, the ascendance of the United States as the most powerful nation in the political and security realms followed its rise as an economic power. The same was true for the United Kingdom in the 19th century. However, the speed and scale of China's rise is unprecedented in historic terms and one which will now redefine world geopolitical power. The 19th and 20th centuries belonged to the West. The 21st century is China's. Importantly, it is not sufficient for any outside power to have a presence in one or the other country alone in order to produce change across the entire playing field in the region. In this sense, although China has a major economic presence in Afghanistan, instead its dominance of the region as a whole is now itself the vital factor sparking change and facilitating Afghanistan's growth, due to a series of concurrent waves of geopolitical interventions now spurring a new type of economic integration in the region.

In consequence, the central theme of this paper is that beyond China's overreaching role, in the geopolitical interactions created as a result of China's emergence, a particular dynamic is emerging in the region which is opening a new set of prospects bringing about a significant new model of economic integration not seen previously.

It is further contended that no geopolitical strategies can be considered or pursued without fully taking into account China's current, emerging and future role in the region. In this sense, for the region spanning from South Asia to Eurasia, with Afghanistan at its heart, an understanding of all probable future states cannot be formulated without first comprehending the impact of China's upcoming global rise and dominance as it is evolving in real-time before our eyes. In this sense, economics may now be swaying politics in this region - with similarities to the Europe of the 18th and 19th centuries - so much so, that it is contributing to shifting the tectonics of global geopolitics and creating the type of economic integration which has been long sought, but never achieved, by other global powers.

## 1. Geopolitics & Regional Economic Integration

The idea of developing a regional strategy to resolve the challenges of the region of Afghanistan via economic development has been in debate for as long as strategies have been pursued there. Typically, regional approaches have been couched under three distinct but related attempts:

i. The first comes from the realisations that as other approaches have not borne fruit, a rush to engage in endless conferences and regional venues (Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECC-A), Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), etc.) to seek agreements on a series of regional interests would realise the protagonists' hopes and bring about results.

ii. Second, the premise of convening gatherings among regional neighbours and power brokers such as the United States (US), European Union (EU) and Russia, where political deals could be struck, was seen as mechanisms to pave the way for stability efforts.

iii. The third approach sought to focus solely on economic cooperation in the region with the expectation that trade and economic ties among regional players can resolve political and geostrategic differences.

All of these have been pursued in the past decades. However, none have resulted in meaningful advances for Afghanistan and its region. Efforts to seek cooperation to spur economic development have been attractive in principal, but as attractive as this approach has been, local interests and obstacles have kept it from fruition. Challenges in Central Asia and the India-Pakistan historic animosity have all played important roles as seemingly intractable obstacles. How can this logjam be broken, in order to have the nations of the region attain a new level of potential? Could the role of new actors and the emergence of a new set of opportunities significantly transform the region with benefits accruing to all?

## Economic Integration

Although economic integration has been generally on the rise in Asia, it has been particularly low among the nations of Central Asia as well as between South and Central Asia. The story is different for continental Asia as a whole. In fact, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) indicates that Asia's trade openness and integration actually surpasses the rest of the world today as it estimates that Asia's trade share could account for more than 50% of global trade by 2050. In sharp contrast to this significant advance in economic integration, intra-regional trade in Central Asia is among the lowest in any region of the world with intra-regional trade making up only about 5% of total trade compared to 65% in the EU.[1] This is a distinctive characteristic of the degree of economic integration in Central Asia. Integration within the region is also staggeringly low for Pakistan and, to some extent, also for India. According to the World Bank, Pakistan trades very little within its own region and accounts for less than half a percent of India's trade.[2] And despite the size of India's economy, its trading activity with the countries of Central Asia makes up a fraction of one percent of its total trade. On the other hand, Central Asia has the natural resources which South Asia's growing economies desperately need. Thus, closer integration would create regional benefit not attainable otherwise. However, at present, there is a notable lack of economic integration between South Asia and Central Asia.

1. Asian Development Bank, "Progress in Regional Cooperation and Integration", July 2012

2. "*Pak-India trade still a fraction of $40 billion potential*", The International Herald Tribune, The Express, March 13, 2012

MASOOD AZIZ

## The Fading Value of Regional Arrangements

While challenges remain in the region, simply being part of a regional scheme or organisation to promote integration does not necessarily create unencumbered sustainable economic growth or improvements in trade transparency, governance and stability. What is now irrevocably changing the playing field, is China's entry in the region. Beijing's investments, along both economic and political dimensions, are allowing for a deeply transformative process in the very nature of the region's economic and geopolitical structures, and are producing faster economic integration. As examined in detail in this paper, investment in road and rail networks increases the means of production and allows for the creation of new enterprises, jobs and innovation. The mere unlocking of the otherwise captured economies in Central Asia, for instance, is itself profoundly transformational in creating regional integration. In the process, it also presents a country like Afghanistan with the prospect of acting as the necessary land bridge between the suppliers and consumers of energy, in addition to creating trade corridors linking Iran eastward to China where it can find new markets never attained previously. In this sense, economics seemingly in search of self-interest, is not merely dictating political advancement, but offering to unlock greater regional potentials as a consequence.

Objectively demonstrating benefits in economic integration emanating directly from the formation of regional trade and economic agreements is problematic at best. Although the EU's economic market and the benefits of the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) are undeniable, growth in trade among these nations was mostly from closer bilateral arrangements rather than as a result of regional schemes. In contrast, in many parts of the globe, a proliferation of regional arrangements, the so-called "spaghetti bowl" of organisations, have led to less effective advances and indeed have at times hindered regional economic integration.

Another argument for pursuing the route of regional organisations is based on the assumption that they will not only integrate markets, but also bring about added transparency, governance and more accountable institutions. However, contrary to this assumption, regional arrangements in Central Asia have typically strengthened and promoted the powers of those in closer control of the means of economic production. On paper the ECO,, created in 1964, has the potential of creating great opportunities, especially in connecting Central Asia to South Asia. In practice, though, the effectiveness of the organisation in producing either economic integration or in building transparent and accountable institutions within its members has been very limited. In a study presenting the relationship between regional arrangements and factors such as institutional building, accountability, political stability, rule of law and control over corruption, Schweicker et al., in a regression analysis, show that being a member of ECO actually has a slightly negative impact on these measures of governance and transparency.[3] The explanation may point to the fact that many regional arrangements, being nothing than more diplomatic support for autocratic regimes, may deepen elite entrenchment, rather than create integration between nations.

**3.** Schweickert, Rainer, Melnykovska, Inna and Plamper, Hedwig: External Drivers of Institutional Change in Central Asia – Regional Integration Schemes and the Role of Russia and China,, March 2012, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, Kiel, Germany

AFGHANISTAN: THE GEOPOLITICS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION.
THE EMERGENCE OF CHINA AS THE NEW FACILITATOR

More importantly, the study by Schweicker et al. also reveals a phenomenon not readily expected. When testing total imports and exports by Central Asian economies, as trade is heavily weighted with external countries, notably with China, it was discovered that increases in trade activities had a positive effect on overall governance. This was explained by the fact that especially smaller scale trade with China may create an impetus for a bottom-up improvement in institutional building, as individual traders will contribute to eroding the power basis of more autocratic regimes. This may not necessary be by design as China's large scale investments have certainly benefited the elite of the nations in question. While wider conclusions cannot be drawn for all countries and all regional arrangements, the data clearly demonstrates that improved trade activity between say, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and China, has contributed, perhaps unknowingly, to incremental improvements in bottom-up institutional improvements. It is important as China is becoming the major economic force in the region - and unlike other attempts reviewed here - it is indeed now poised to act as the leading actor in re-shaping the economic integration plane in significant ways. The section on China later on in this paper reviews the tenets of such a premise, including the nature and evolution of, and the degree of integration in, the region.

## 2. Europe & the United States: Regional Presence

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the United States has sought to extend its influence over the greater region of Central and South Asia, to address concerns over its security interests and to assure its links with the nations of the region. The US influence in the region has been chiefly defined by its military presence in Afghanistan, where economic strategies to stabilize the country have been particularly lacking. As the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is now withdrawing its troops and as Afghanistan's economic sustainability is in question, the stability of the region is not assured. Two noteworthy examples to best illustrate the shortcomings of strategies seeking economic development as a stabilising factor are particularly revealing in demonstrating the value of the models pursued by the US and NATO members, and stand in sharp contrast with regional approaches pursued by China. One such example is the establishment of the Northern Distribution Network (NDN); and the other is the New Silk Road Initiative.

### The NDN

In 2008, the US established the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) to help supply NATO troops with non-lethal material in Afghanistan via air, rail, and roads and to connect Eurasian routes to Central Asian and finally to reach Afghanistan. One of its important aspects has been that the vast majority of the materials shipped through the network, more than 85%, has been shipped by commercial carriers. As such, the massive NDN network was able to connect Afghanistan with far away locations via transport routes starting as far as the port of Riga in northern Europe. This is a *de facto* "silk road", with potential longer-lasting economic, security and political merit. The NDN, although first

designed to be at the service of military exigencies, represented certain commercial and economic advantages to be leveraged, due to its proven extensive logistics and transport capabilities.  However, the US and its NATO allies have largely missed the opportunity to help utilise what the NDN could have offered, and to integrate those aspects, which might have allowed the Allies to develop and retain a more sustainable approach to economic activity in Afghanistan and its region.

**The "New Silk Road" Initiative & the Istanbul Process**

In 2011, the US began promoting the idea of a "New Silk Road Strategy" to help advance regional trade, economic cooperation and transportation and to help assure sustainable economic development in Afghanistan.  However, eleven years after first intervening in Afghanistan, introducing such an idea could only be seen as an attempt at a rushed "exit strategy."  This approach was presented as part of the "Heart of Asia" process and was initiated at the Istanbul conference in November 2011, which aimed at promoting regional cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours.

The New Silk Road initiative and the Istanbul process demonstrate the clear difference in approach and capabilities when it comes to the fast changing dynamics of the region. It further illustrates the contrast between the US and European nations and how China operates within this region.  To begin with, as much as the concept of the New Silk Road is not new (but deserving of attention), for it to be realised, it has to be funded.  Yet, the US has instead positioned itself not as a facilitator of financing but rather, as a political broker to push for private sector financing and from organisations such as the International Finance Corporation (IFC), ADB and others.  In addition, promoting free trade as a concept is attractive but much more challenging once the stark realities of internal and regional political rivalries among Central Asian countries are understood.  As a result, participants such as Russia, Pakistan, Iran, Central Asian nations and even India raised serious objections about the initiative.

In addition to the lack of financial incentives to advance the tenets of the initiative's economic cooperation approach, the political incentives were also missing.  Again, in the absence of pre-developed demarches to create political trust among Afghanistan's neighbours, the US faced increasingly challenging obstacles to pursue such approaches – despite the urgency of the exit strategy looming now.  The failures of these initiatives are grounded on the premise that the EU and, especially the US, have not been able to establish sufficient influence and/or adequate trust among the key participants in the region; nor have they been close enough to the changing realities of each nation and the evolving dynamics among them to succeed in achieving the desired objectives.  Importantly, the US needed to recognise that while Afghanistan is important to many of its neighbours, its centrality often derives from how it impacts specific views and shifting strategic concerns in the region.  As will be described below, in forging closer relations with the nations of the region, China is positioning itself to follow an alternative path and is now able to exert an increasing level of influence in the region.

**Europe's Interests**

At the turn of the 21st century, Europe was poised to uphold its status as the largest trading block in the world and to take a leading role in shaping the structure of the upcoming multi-polar world order. The EU's own economic integration was arguably one of the most successful regional achievements of the 20th century. As Europe has been held back by the depth of the 2008 financial crisis, Asia's growth has continued and is beginning to reshape the global economic balance. In this respect, trade and energy ties with the emerging nations of Asia are more than ever an imperative for EU nations. China stands out in this context, because its relations with Europe are now becoming the vital link to Asia. European efforts to build stronger ties with India and other nations in Asia are also increasing. Europe's presence in Afghanistan, directly and with NATO, and on both the security and development dimension, have been an important demonstration of EU foreign policy engagements in Asia. When it comes to Central Asia, the EU has been more tepid. Although its engagement in Central Asia represents the nature, diversity and complexity of its member nations, the EU has not treated Central Asia as a strategic realm. Furthermore, Europe's relations in Central Asia are also marked by a certain dissonance. Its desires to promote human rights, democracy and good governance can sometimes be at odds with its interests in the areas of security and its needs for energy supplies.

At the same time, access to Central Asia provides an alternative energy source for Europe, as it is heavily dependent on Russia. Russia now represents about a third of Europe's oil imports and over 40% if its gas imports. By contrast, EU members import about 3.5% of their fuel from Central Asia. However, Russia has not always been a reliable energy partner, as it turned off its gas supply to Europe due to the events in the Ukraine. Importantly, Russia has been seeking to diversify its own energy supplies by launching massive efforts to shift its attention away from Europe and going east to Asia, including supplying China's booming economy. In fact, the International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts that although Europe's demand for gas will increase by 13% between 2008 and 2035, China's demand will increase by a whopping 360% during the same period.[4] When it comes to trade too, the EU remains quite absent from the regions of Central Asia and South Asia. Total trade between the EU and Central Asia remains one of the lowest, taking any comparison of two regions trading with each other.

On the whole, perhaps due to the complexity and diverse national interests within Europe or the sheer multiplicity of various European actors, no significant European grand strategy has emerged for the region of Central and South Asia. This lack of clarity and indeed vagueness in the approach by Europe towards this region is quite surprising, especially as the multi-polar world is now increasingly defined by the US and Asian giants, seemingly leaving the EU behind. While Europe has attempted to keep good relations with India, for example, the rest of the region, notably Central Asia, has been viewed by Brussels as non-vital to its global geostrategic position - and very much unlike its historic ties from the colonial days with regions in Africa or in Latin America. On the other hand, it can be argued that Europe may have a higher strategic interest in Central Asia, than does the United States. Not only does Europe need closer ties to gain the advantage of accessing the region's energy resources, but it

**4.** The New Great Game in Central Asia,. The European Council on Foreign Relations, Asia Centre 2011

MASOOD AZIZ

also needs to mitigate its dependence on other sources such as Russia. On the political and security fronts, Brussels has not offered a security strategy for the region worthy of the potential needs and interests of European nations. In this respect, the EU has continued to work through existing channels such as NATO and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), remaining a participant, rather than leading the agenda. Although Europe does need to improve its own stance in the region of Central Asia, it may be much more of a challenge now than a decade ago. This is due to the fact that Brussels has to now contend with the global geopolitical change emanating from China's global rise. Indeed, China's ascendance will be nothing short of transformational on how Europe interacts with Asia as a whole, but by consequence, also with the US and with Russia, too.

## 3. The Centrality of Afghanistan

Both European nations and the US have had a heavy presence in Afghanistan for over 11 years. Afghanistan now ranks as the US' longest war, surpassing the Vietnam War. NATO's presence in Afghanistan has been defining, as it is its first engagement outside its traditional sphere. The US has now spent over 20 times more on the Afghanistan war as it did for the Marshall Plan to help rebuild Europe. Yet, after a decade of efforts by NATO countries, stability has not been achieved in Afghanistan and its region.

Clearly, military strategies and their oversized spending have not been sufficient to secure Afghanistan's stability and prosperity. Most of the achievements are fragile at best and may evaporate if the international community's focus is lost. On the security front, despite the early ousting of the Taliban, insecurity is rampant in many areas, especially along the border with Pakistan. On the development front, international aid has been ineffective at best, despite unprecedented levels of spending (surpassing $100 billion). The model of development intervention applied and practised in Afghanistan has now demonstrated one undeniable fact: that the international development aid mechanism is broken. Only a fraction of the funds allocated to the reconstruction effort reach the population in Afghanistan. As a result, a critical shortcoming has been the neglect of a deliberate approach to economic development as central to achieving stability both in Afghanistan and the region. Given the lack of success of the strategies thus far and the extreme ineffectiveness of the reconstruction models pursed, alternative strategies, inclusive of the role of emerging regional powers, need to be re-evaluated to help stabilise one of the most volatile regions of the world.

NATO and the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) have now defined a schedule of troop withdrawal from Afghanistan to be completed by the end of 2014. This is predicated on a transition plan to hand responsibility to the Afghan security forces. However, stability is still in question as the transition plan is dependent on a nascent Afghan force being able to secure the country's borders, as well as to handle regional threats. At the same time, as confirmed by a recent World Bank study (May 2012), a precipitous withdrawal from the country could prompt an economic collapse as 90% of the $17.1 billion current Afghan national budget comes from foreign assistance.[5] The rapid troop withdrawal itself

5. Afghanistan in Transition: Looking Beyond 2014, The World Bank, May 2012

AFGHANISTAN: THE GEOPOLITICS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION. THE EMERGENCE OF CHINA AS THE NEW FACILITATOR

will change the economic picture in the short run in Afghanistan.  In the long run, without the foundations of sustainable economic growth based on local means of production and efforts of integrating the country within its regional root, a sustained stability cannot be assured.

## The Emergence of an Unprecedented Regional Supply-Demand Equation

As will be examined in more detail in the following section, the economies of the Central Asian countries are held back by characteristics specific to landlocked countries.  Heavy reliance on commodity-based economies earning below market prices for natural resources stunts the growth of their economies.  However, Afghanistan is particularly well placed to help unlock a new potential in the region.  There is indeed an unprecedented economic supply and demand equation emerging in the wider region with Afghanistan at its centre, which might be termed a "*New Supply-Demand Equation at the Heart of Asia.*"  This equation has never manifested itself in the region's history and at the scale seen today, and has wide consequences beyond economics alone.

More specifically, the equation refers to:

a. The existing underdeveloped economic structures in the Central Asian countries who are in turn endowed with great natural resources *[the supply factor];* and
b. The unprecedented demand for energy from India and Pakistan and principally from China which cannot sustain its economic growth without a massive increase in the use of natural resources such as oil and gas *[the demand factor]*.

This supply and demand equation directly relates to economic factors now under way in the region which are not only massive but quite unique in both their regional characteristics and their potential global impact.  It then follows that an opening of new markets and new regional exchange patterns via Afghanistan would significantly alter the actual foundations of the structures of the economies in the region.  As China and India are looking for sources of energy in far away locations, only a few hundred miles away from India and bordering China are large reserves of hydrocarbons in Central Asia as well as in Iran.  Afghanistan is the natural conduit at the heart of this unprecedented demand and supply equation.

## The Central Asia-South Asia Corridor & Afghanistan as its Catalyst

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2012,[6] the quality of infrastructure in Central Asian countries remains the lowest compared to other regions. In addition, the costs of importing and exporting goods in the region remain high due to weak and less than effective trade facilitations.  A recent ADB report shows that export and import costs in 2011 for East Asian countries were 7.2% and 7.6% respectively.  However, for Central Asian countries, for the same period, they were a staggering 41.4% and 64.8%, respectively.[7]  The building of road and transport corridors across Afghanistan would allow for better economic integration between Central and South Asia.

6. Xavier Sala-i-Martin, Professor, World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2012, World Economic Forum, Centre for Global Competitiveness and Performance, Geneva, 2011
7. Asian Development Bank, Progress in Regional Cooperation and Integration, July 2012

MASOOD AZIZ

The ADB has recommended the building of 52 road corridors through Afghanistan connecting Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan with five seaports in Pakistan and Iran.[8] In its estimates, as a result, overall trade could increase by as much as 15%, or more than $12 billion, for the entire region.

The potential benefits of these corridors are immediately significant to both Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries, as Afghanistan's exports would increase by 202% over the five years after construction. This would directly impact Afghanistan's GDP, adding an extra 4.1% to GDP growth and would create 4.1 million permanent jobs. The construction of the corridors is estimated to also increase total regional trade by 160% and to increase the combined GDP of the participant countries in the region by over 5% per year. Thus, if it were realised, Afghanistan has a significant potential to be a facilitator of economic growth and integration in the region.

**Economic Integration via Energy & Mineral Development Corridors**

Afghanistan has also the added potential to act as a pivotal country for both the trading and exporting of electric power. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are building excess capacity for electric production to bring additional revenues from exports. Yet, if they cannot find export markets, their large hydro-electric stations would end up proving costly. Those countries endowed with power generation due to their topographies could finally unshackle their economies from dependence on non-market Russian-provided prices and seek new markets in South Asia, via Afghanistan as the catalyst nation. Both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan saw that they could free themselves from dependence on northern economic models and instead obtain market prices, by opening up their economies and exporting their excess electricity production. Afghanistan is thus well placed to benefit, as its natural centrality is now firmly based on the changing regional economic equation emerging as a result of broader global economic factors and is not dependent on simple political demarches by single players.

In 2007, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) announced the discovery of a number of important mineral mines in Afghanistan and has in effect put Afghanistan on the world map, for the first time, when it comes to natural resources. The extent and diversity of the discoveries can truly be transformative for Afghanistan and its region. In 2010, it was estimated that the value of these mineral reserves could reach between $1 trillion and $3 trillion. If explored effectively, this could be a "game-changer" for Afghanistan as the country could become one of the world's largest producers of copper and iron ore. In addition to the mineral mines, the USGS has also announced the discovery of up to 1.9 billion barrels of oil, especially along the northern borders of the country in the Amu Darya and Afghan-Tajik Basins.[9] For comparison purposes, according to BP, Equatorial Guinea has proven reserves of 1.7 billion barrels and produces about 250,000 barrels of crude a day. With oil prices around $100 a barrel, once Afghanistan can produce about 250,000 bpd, it can earn about $9.1 billion a year in revenues. This is significant, since with the country's GDP being about $20 billion, these revenues alone would represent about half of its total GDP.

8. Asian Development Bank (Mar 2005), Second Ministerial Conference Report on the Economic Impact of Central-South Asian Road Corridors

9. US Geological Survey (USGS), USGS Projects in Afghanistan, http://afghanistan.cr.usgs.gov/minerals

Recent interest by international firms in helping to develop these mines has been high, especially due to the fact the security is generally better in the north of the country. For instance, a consortium of six Indian companies, including four state-owned ones, has tendered its bids for a copper mine project in Afghanistan's Shaida area, near its western city of Herat. The Indian firms are interested in the exploration of these mines for their copper and gold deposits. In July 2012, Exxon Mobil submitted its expression of interest to participate in the Afghan-Tajik Basin oil and gas tender, holding 1 billion barrels of oil. Six other firms are also bidding for the same project (from India, Pakistan, Turkey, Brazil, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).[10] Exxon faces stiff competition from other firms, but even Exxon will not be able to offer the type of incentives to the Afghan government that China can offer. In fact, as hard as it is for Exxon to compete with other firms, it would be nearly impossible for it to compete with a Chinese firm, as the latter's approach often includes a package of investment that goes well beyond the mine in question.

In fact, the China National Petroleum Company already won the contract for exploring both oil and gas fields in blocks in the Amu Darya Basin in 2011. According to USGS, in addition to oil, it has estimated that the Amu Darya Basin holds over 52 trillion cubic feet (1.5 trillion cubic meters) of natural gas.[11] Again, at these levels, the reserves are significant as they represent 10 times more than Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey. In addition, in 2007, China made a significant commitment to Afghanistan when it agreed to invest a whopping $3.5 billion in Afghanistan's Aynak Copper Mines. This was the single largest investment in Afghanistan's history. The Aynak copper deposit was estimated to be the second largest unexplored deposit in the world and has the potential to generate as much as $88 billion in wealth over its 30 year span.[12] In addition to the initial payment of $800 million for extraction rights by the China Metallurgical Group Corporation (the Chinese state-owned winner of the contract), the production from the mine is expected to add a revenue stream of about $400 million a year, for the next 30 years, to the Afghan state.[13] This represents about a third of the current revenues of the Afghan Government.

The Chinese investment in the Aynak mines is also important from an additional perspective, as it points to Beijing's approach to a packaged economic arrangement, much like in other countries. The agreement also calls for the Chinese to invest in the development of a series of related infrastructure projects, including, power plants, roads and railroad lines. As a result, the construction of a 400 megawatt electricity plant is planned; the laying out of rail lines to transport the copper, including a rail line that would connect to the Uzbek border and other lines to connect to Pakistan; and additional road and transport projects. Accordingly, if undertaken under these provisions, the Aynak mine is expected to generate about 10,000 direct jobs and an additional 40,000 employment related to the broader infrastructure development projects. The discovery of these riches offers Afghanistan - for the first time - a golden opportunity to create and expand economic growth and sustainability: beyond 2014, according to World Bank projections, the country will need around $6 billion to $7 billion of foreign aid each year in order to grow its economy.[14]

To confirm its commitment to Afghanistan further and to broadcast its intention, on September 22nd 2012, China signed security and

10. "*As Exxon Mobil Weighs Oil Bid, Afghans Move Closer to a Foreign Investment Goal*", Matthew Rosenberg, New York Times, July 5, 2012

11. Ibid.

12. "*Uneasy Engagement China Willing to Spend Big on Afghan Commerce*", Michael Wines, The New York Times, December 30, 2009

13. Minerals in Afghanistan: The Aynak Copper Deposit, The Ministry of Mines and Industry, Kabul, Afghanistan, accessed July 28, 2012, http://www.bgs.ac.uk/afghan-minerals/docs/aynak_a4.pdf

14. Afghanistan in Transition: Looking Beyond2014, The World Bank, May 2012

economic agreements with Afghanistan during a rare trip to Kabul by a top Chinese official. Mr Zhou Yongkang, Beijing's domestic security chief and a member of its Politburo Standing Committee, who has also overseen a crackdown on unrest in the Chinese Muslim-populated Xinjiang region bordering Afghanistan, represented the first visit to Afghanistan by a senior Chinese leader since 1966. True to its foreign policy imperative globally, China has not sought military involvement in Afghanistan, however this agreement on advancing security and economic cooperation included an arrangement for China to help "train, fund and equip Afghan police."[15] Interestingly, in addition to visiting Afghanistan, Zhou was also scheduled to travel to Turkmenistan following a visit to Singapore. This is another demonstration of Beijing's continuing commitment to the region as whole and reflective of China's growing influence as a world power, as it now contemplates the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan.

## The Trials & Tribulations of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI)

Building energy pipelines through Afghanistan is not a novel idea.

In fact, an initial idea for the Trans-Afghan Pipeline was conceived in the early 1990s when Turkmenistan along with international gas and oil corporations desired to build a pipeline through Afghanistan going south from Turkmenistan. After the ousting of the Taliban, in 2002, the Asian Development Bank revived the idea and conducted a feasibility study to establish the TAPI pipeline. The project's goals were to export up to 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas per year via a 1,800-kilometre long pipeline, from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and finally reaching India. In 2008, the total project costs were estimated at $7.6 billion.[16] The revenues from the pipeline were projected to be as much as $1.4 billion per year in transit fees for Afghanistan. India and Pakistan would receive 14 bcm per year each which amounted to about 15% of Pakistan's total annual energy consumption and about 1.5% of India's.[17] As originally conceived, TAPI presented an opportunity for regional cooperation with Afghanistan as the epicentre, linking the economies of the four countries together and with wider regional implications and fitting into the desires of international participants under the framework of the CAREC initiative. Although momentum has been lacking in recent years, TAPI received a new shot in the arm when in June 2012, India's GAIL and Pakistan's Inter State Gas System signed gas purchases and sales agreements with Turkmenistan to supply TAPI with the flow of energy from Central Asia. Earlier, in April 2012, Turkmenistan and Pakistan signed agreements to solidify their discussions and have TAPI, when built, transport gas from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan to Multan in Pakistan, and then to the Indian township of Fazilka. TAPI has always been a challenge due to the security situation in Afghanistan and because the pipeline would traverse from Afghanistan's east to its south, the typical hotbed of the Taliban. However, in a geostrategic move worthy of the best chess player in the neighborhood, and as further described below, a new twist initiated by Beijing, proposing a pipeline from Turkmenistan to China via Afghanistan, may eventually put the last nail in the TAPI's coffin and spell its demise.

**15.** "*Top China official visits Afghanistan, signs security deal*", Reuters, September 23, 2012, http://www.euronews.com/newswires/1666818-top-china-official-visits-afghanistan-signs-security-deal/

**16.** Asian Development Bank, Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Natural Gas Pipeline Project, Technical Assistance Report, May 2012

**17.** Foster, John, "*Afghanistan, the TAPI Pipeline, and Energy Geopolitics*" Journal of Energy Security, March 23, 2010

AFGHANISTAN: THE GEOPOLITICS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION. THE EMERGENCE OF CHINA AS THE NEW FACILITATOR

**Proposed TAPI Gas Pipeline**



Source: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

**Central and South Asia Pipelines – A Regional View**



Source: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives**\***

\*The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, "A Pipeline Through A Troubled Land", June 19, 2008, Ottawa, Canada

MASOOD AZIZ

## 4. Challenges & Potentials in Pakistan & Central Asia

### I. Pakistan's Challenges

As much as the challenges of Afghanistan are extreme, they may pale with the dire situation of Pakistan. The differences between the two countries could not be more striking. Pakistan's population is five times more than Afghanistan's. Pakistan is one of the world's seven nations with nuclear weapons and is situated next door to India, also a nuclear nation. The end of the Cold War presented an historic opportunity in the region, engendering economic progress and reform, and sparking the burgeoning of new industries, notably in high-tech. This era of globalisation, with the explosion of new regional trade and new exchanges between countries, marking a new dawn for Asia, has in effect, passed Pakistan by. The country's economic growth has been the lowest in South Asia. As detailed in the table below, according to the World Bank, Pakistan's average GDP growth for years 2007 to 2011 was 3.5%. GDP growth for the same period was 6.2% for Bangladesh and 7.7% for India.[18] Pakistan's rate of inflation at 11% in 2011 is the highest in South Asia. Its agricultural sector has also been lagging and was dealt an additional blow with the series of floods in recent years, which devastated parts of the country.

| GDP Growth in South Asia | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pakistan | 5.7 | 1.6 | 3.6 | 4.1 | 2.4 | 3.5 |
| Bangladesh | 6.4 | 6.2 | 5.7 | 6.1 | 6.7 | 6.2 |
| India | 9.8 | 3.9 | 8.2 | 9.6 | 6.9 | 7.7 |
| | | | | | | |
| Pakistan's GDP Growth Difference (2007-2011) | | | | | | |
| With Bangladesh | 2.7 | | | | | |
| With India | 4.2 | | | | | |

Source: World Development Indicators

At the same time, daily electricity outages are negatively affecting growth and crippling small businesses, which are vital to its economy. Pakistan's Planning Commission estimates that the country's energy shortfall has cost the country 2 to 3 percentage points in GDP growth in the past year. The credit rating agency Moody's cut Pakistan's sovereign credit rating deeper in the junk credit category in mid 2012 citing concerns about the country's ability to service its growing debt, political uncertainty and inflation. In September 2012, the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report ranked Pakistan among the bottom 20 of 144 economies in the world.[19]

Economic integration within the region is particularly a concern in the case of Pakistan, as the country does not trade very much within its own region. According to the World Bank the bulk of its trading is with far off countries such as the United Kingdom, the Unites States, Germany and the Arabian Gulf area. Although trading with countries situated at

18. World Development Indicators, The World Bank, Washington DC, accessed July 29, 2012
19. Xavier Sala-i-Martin, Professor, World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2012, World Economic Forum., Centre for Global Competitiveness and Performance, Geneva, 2011

longer distances is also beneficial, not trading enough with neighbouring countries may explain part of Pakistan's stunted economic growth. This is one of Pakistan's greatest disadvantages, keeping its economic growth below its economic potential. Pakistan's trade with Afghanistan has been growing over the past decade, and is now just under $2 billion. Interestingly, although some trading is done via the UAE, trade between Pakistan and India, the giant in South Asia, is also about $2.5 billion a year. In fact, bilateral trade with India is well below what it could be. In fact, trade with India accounts for only about 3% of Pakistan's trade with all countries[20] and Pakistan accounts for less than half a percent of India's trade. However, in a recent study, when trade is considered under a gravity model which estimates potential bilateral trade rather than actual trade, assuming effective economic integration, it was projected that bilateral trade between India and Pakistan could reach over $40 billion a year.[21] That would be over 20 times the current level of trade between these two neighbours. Seeking to increase economic integration and trade openness between the two countries will not only help alleviate Pakistan's fragile economy, open interactions between the two, spur regional activity for small business, but also would unlock a whole new plane of economic activity in South Asia, which could in turn benefit Afghanistan and other nations in the region.

## II. China: The Importance of Gwadar for Regional Reach

Pakistan and China are long-standing allies and enjoy what can be characterised best as a sui generis relationship. China has had over 60 years of close relations with Pakistan on the political, military and economic fronts. It has been Pakistan's principal provider of nuclear and conventional weapons and technology and its principal arms supplier over this time. Furthermore, China has steadily expanded its economic ties with Pakistan as it has helped finance over two hundred projects in the country, including the expansion and improvement of the Karakoram Highway, the Thar coal project, the Bhasha Dam, and the Gwadar deep sea port construction on the coast of Pakistan's Balochistan province. Gwadar has emerged as a vital strategic move by China and has raised concerns by others, notably India, which believes China may eye its use as a deep water port for the expansion of its naval power in the Indian Ocean. China signed the Gwadar agreement just four months after the US intervention in Afghanistan, in 2001. In addition, Beijing has also invested over $200 million into building coastal highways that will connect Gwadar with the port of Karachi.

China also aims to help Pakistan connect its economy with Central Asia by land routes, via the construction of additional roads from the Pakistani border town of Chaman in Balochistan to Qandahar in Afghanistan. The thinking is that the Gwadar port will connect the region via the Karakoram Highway in Pakistan to its border in China's Xinjiang region. In this sense, Beijing is attempting to integrate the Pakistani economy into its own commercial and trade activities, and at the same time opening access to Central Asia via land routes. The design and execution of this plan has also addressed China's continuing concern to seek control over its majority Muslim province in Xinjiang via massive investments in the region as a whole, including in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

20. Trade Comparison, Pakistan's Trade 2012, Research & Development Cell, PRGIEA, Lahore, Pakistan, March 3, 2012
21. Khan , Mohsin S., India-Pakistan Trade: A Roadmap for Enhancing Economic Relations, Peterson Institute for International Economics, July 2009

MASOOD AZIZ

Under an agreement with Pakistan, Singapore's PSA International has been managing the port of Gwadar for the past five years, though it is reportedly recently preparing to leave, due to certain disagreements. As the subsequent phases of construction for the port ran into uncertainties, China's commitment to its success was questioned. However, on August 30th 2012, Pakistan announced that it will turn over the management of the port to a Chinese company.[22] Beijing's return is indeed a watershed in the region as this would be China's largest commitment to Pakistan (other than the Karakoram Highway). It also confirms China's desire to build the oil and gas pipeline from the port all the way to its own border, across Pakistani territory, solidifying its foothold in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, where it has considerable strategic interest both in helping address its energy security and in obtaining broader influence in the region.

### III. Central Asia: Under-Trading & Regional Potential

Central Asian countries share many common characteristics, including significant historic, cultural, social, and ethnic ties. They also share geographic characteristics, such as challenging topography and lack of direct access to the sea, as all countries in the region are landlocked. Although there has been some progress since the break-up of the Soviet Union, improvements on governance, civic society and democratic institutions have been uneven and lacking. Despite advances in the past two decades, the countries of Central Asia are burdened by their Soviet style economic legacies, the dominance of primary commodities, the lack of effective trade facilities impeding regional trade, and in many cases, wholly underperforming transport infrastructures, which have all kept economic growth at paces well below their potential. The rise of China as the main factor in the region and the potential of Afghanistan may both now contribute to shifting the geopolitical plane and unlocking Central Asia's potential.

Central Asia's daunting limitations have resulted in creating serious and lasting economic challenges. In particular, trade among neighbouring countries makes up only a fraction of the region's total trade. In addition, Central Asian countries "under-trade" with South and East Asia compared to their actual trade potential. By regional standards, trade among Central Asia countries is remarkably stunted compared to intra-trade among countries in other regions, as it stands at 5.3% of total trade while it is 36% among East Asian countries.[23] In economic modelling, the so-called "gravity model" is used to assess the potential for trade activity and as a basis for comparison with actual trade in estimating the extent of lost trade. For example, under the gravity model, Ian Babetsk found that, adjusting for relative economic size and distances, a full decade after being free from the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan traded at levels considerably below their potentials compared to EU countries. Trade also remains below its potential with other regions. Elborgh-Woytek found that Central Asian countries actual trade with the EU was three times below their potential for trade.[24] Although infrastructure quality in Central Asian countries is far behind that of East Asia, even more striking is the lack of foreign direct investments (FDI) among the nations of the region. While the share of intraregional FDI inflows in 2008–2009 for Southeast

**22.** "*Pakistan in talks to hand port to China*", Farhan Bokhari, The Financial Times, August 30, 2012 4:27 pm

**23.** Asia Development Bank, Progress in Regional Cooperation and Integration, July 2012

**24.** Babetskii, Ian., Babetskaia-Kukharchuk, Oxana., Raiser, Martin. "How deep is your trade? Transition and international integration in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union," Working paper No. 83. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, London, 2003. And, Elborgh-Woytek, Katrin, "Of Openness and Distance: Trade Developments in the Commonwealth of Independent States, 1993-2002," IMF Working Paper No. 03/207. International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC. 2003, pp. 9-17

Asia and East Asia was 6.3% and 42%, respectively, it was only 0.02% in Central Asia.[25] This is an important indication of the impact of a serious lack of regional economic integration.

*Rivalries in Economic and Political Models*

Many of the nations in this region have stark disagreements and rivalries, which are in turn being leveraged by external power players to create new in-roads in attempts to secure their strategic interests. External participants have historically pursued their own interests in the region, often at the expense of the regional nations involved. Russia, Europe and the US have sought to advance their interests by attempting to create progress in their own image; and to assure their security concerns, as represented by the latter two's massive presence in nearby Afghanistan. However, as examined earlier, it is clear that Beijing is emerging as the most influential when it comes to leveraging these regional rivalries.

For instance, in relation to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, who have pursued two different models of economic development, one is largely based on market oriented policies and the other on continuing to preserve state ownership of most natural resources, as well as controlling price subsidies. Another example is that of the "water wars" in the region, with the water system being intricately tied to both energy security and the security of water supply for all countries involved. Downstream countries, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and parts of Kazakhstan, where water is vital to agricultural production, are concerned about upstream providers, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In turn, both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan seek to use their water systems to produce energy for domestic use and increasingly for the purpose of exporting. These rivalries are not just stories from the past. On September 7 2012, while on a visit to Kazakhstan's capital, President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan has in fact re-iterated calls against neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, warning that their efforts to build hydroelectric power stations on rivers upstream may spark more than neighborhood spats.[26] External powers need to understand the particularity of each country in the region, to best advance their interests. In this sense, as evidenced by their growing close political and commercial ties forged in the past decade, no other power than China is in a better position, not only to link the region together, but to best exert its influent over its geopolitics.

## IV. Russia's Fading Influence

In addition to the lack of trust between the countries of Central Asia, and despite the historic ties still binding the former republics to Russia, tensions remain - and in certain cases have increased over time - with Moscow. For example, Turkmenistan resisted participating in NATO's northern supply routes for Afghanistan via Russia as it remained distrustful of Russia's desire to dominate its transport corridors. Russia's pursuit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is increasingly seen as creating competition in the region, rather than fostering agreements, and as having the purpose of Russia acting as an ultimate provider of security. In the same vein, Uzbekistan's relations

25. Asia Development Bank, Progress in Regional Cooperation and Integration, July 2012
26. "*Uzbekistan Leader Warns of Water Wars in Central Asia*", Eurasianet. org, September 7, 2012

MASOOD AZIZ

with Russia have been rocky too. Even though it had a leadership role in it, Uzbekistan left the CSTO to seek closer ties with NATO.

Additionally, one of the important failures in Central Asia is the lack of any regional mechanism allowing effective cooperation and economic integration especially in the energy and trade sectors with Russia. The great links binding Russia to the region were not leveraged or improved to facilitate new frameworks addressing the needs of these economies as the 21st century arrived. This is partly Russia's shortcoming: however, it is also a manifestation of Moscow's lack of ultimate control over the extension of influence in a world with significant new emerging powers. For instance, in the gas sectors, Russia has been busy trying to play off Central Asian nations against one other, to extract maximum profit for its energy conglomerates. Bilateral agreements, often putting other nations at a disadvantage, have kept gas price agreements artificial and unsustainable compared with world market requirements. However, Russia has not been successful in engineering greater influence over the countries of Central Asia now conscious of their new potential.

The fact that Central Asia's structural characteristics are keeping its prospects from being realised (for example, trade potential is much higher than actual trade) reveals one of the most substantial dormant assets still to be leveraged in the region. As mentioned earlier, although there have been attempts on the international level to help resolve these challenges, they have hitherto lacked effectiveness. The solution may not be easily reached, since it may now be increasingly dependent on the desire by the nations in the region to connect to outside markets. In fact, the new geopolitical shift in Central Asia can now be seen under the umbrella of an emerging structure of multi-dimensional foreign policy, essentially based on economic interests and the wishes of each country to increase export revenues. In this sense, despite Russia's historic dominance over gas and other energy infrastructures in the past, these schemes are wearing thin and have provided an opening for the Central Asia states to seek better economic rents. All the Central Asian nations are now engaged in these efforts, with even the smaller countries such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan looking beyond Russia, which itself will now have to compete with Turkey, Europe and the US, but most importantly, also with China. Despite the lack of highly developed governance structures in the region and the pursuit of rent-seeking activities by many of its leaders, it seems that due to China's advances in the region, economics may be beginning to define intra-regional politics in this part of the world.

## 5. China's Rise

### A Global Economic Power

Since beginning its economic reform in 1979 and opening up its markets to foreign trade and investment, China's economic growth has been unprecedented in history. The country's annual gross domestic product (GDP) has increased by 9.9% for 31 years in a row now. By contrast, in the United States, the world's largest economy, GDP growth has averaged 2.8% during the same three decades.[27]

27 *"The celestial economy, by 2030 China's economy could loom as large as Britain's in the 1870s or America's in the 1970s"*, The Economist, September 10, 2011

No other nation of significant size has grown at this rate. In nominal terms, China is now considered the world's second largest economy. However, what lies ahead may be more striking yet and a fact we all have to reckon with. A few years ago, when Goldman Sachs projected that China's GDP would overtake that of the United States by 2027, it took many by surprise. Yet, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its World Economic Outlook of April 2011,[28] predicted that China's economy would exceed the size of the US economy by 2016. What is even more striking is that by using purchasing power parity (PPP), a more realistic comparative measure of economies, China's economy may actually already be larger than that of the United States. In fact, the economist Arvind Subramanian has concluded that China's economy has already surpassed the economy of the United States in 2010.[29] If true, for the first time in over 200 years of Western economic dominance, a nation outside of the Western domain will dominate the world economy. This fact should not be taken lightly, since in the case of the US' economic dominance, security and political dominance also followed. Before the US, the same was true for the United Kingdom. If history is a guide, the same may now come true for China. What remains to be seen is what follows next.

## China's Geostrategic Interests in Energy Security

China's economic growth is vital to its survival, not only because it has been able to extract over 500 million of its people out of poverty – the greatest number ever in human history – but also because without continued growth, China may face social and political challenges which may risk the country's cohesion and stability. To help sustain its meteoric economic growth, China also recognises that it needs to assure the supply of sufficient energy resources. It thus follows that its massive appetite for energy is a national security imperative. China is now the world's number one consumer of coal, steel and copper. It is mostly responsible for the soaring global prices in oil and commodities and is now second only to the US in terms of oil and electricity consumption. This Chinese phenomenon is a challenge with truly global dimensions. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has stated that China surpassed the US in 2009 as the largest energy consumer nation in the world. Despite vigorous efforts at domestic exploration, the IEA projects that China's oil imports will increase by over 600% by 2030. To place this need for energy in the global context, the IEA has estimated that Chinese demand will represent 40% of the projected increase in total global energy demand.[30] China relies on foreign imports for over 50% of its oil consumption and, as projected by the IEA, this dependence will increase to 70%-80% in just a few years. Already over 80% of China's oil imports come from the Middle East region with 90% of its oil traffic passing through the Straits of Malacca in the Indian Ocean to reach China in the South China Sea.[31] China is all too aware that security for the Straits of Malacca has been provided by US carriers and gunships. Beijing sees its level of energy dependence on foreign sources and on routes it cannot fully control as a strategic risk to the country's growth and social stability. This concern over energy dependence is pushing China to make long-lasting strategic decisions with major security implications, not only for its region, but also for the rest of the world.

28. International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its World Economic Outlook of April 2011, http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2011/01/weo-data/index.aspx

29. Subramanian, Arvind, Dr., "*The Inevitable Superpower*", Foreign Affairs, September/October 2011

30. International Energy Agency, Beyond the OECD - China, People's Republic of, http://www.iea.org/country/n_country.asp?COUNTRY_CODE=CN

31. "*China's Geostrategic Search for Oil*", John Lee, The Washington Quarterly, Summer 2012, 35:3 pp. 75_92

MASOOD AZIZ

## China as the Dominant Force in the Region

Since the 1980s, Beijing has pursued a periphery policy of fostering closer relations with its neighbours. While at first designed to mitigate fears about Chinaës rise, the strategy also comprised the development of closer economic and security relations. When the Soviet Union collapsed, China was understandably concerned about undue dissipation of authority over nuclear weapons and to mitigate any support that the newly created states might incite in Xingjian's secessionist movement in Western China. Beijing's strategy of engagement in the region seeks to gain ground over Russia; to exert greater influence while it positions itself for NATO's departure from Afghanistan; and to serve its interests vis a vis other large powers, such as India. China helped establish the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 1991, which includes Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as members, with Afghanistan, India and Pakistan as observers. Through the SCO, Beijing has extended its writ not only over Central Asia, but over the entire region.

With China now the leading economic power in Central Asia, its presence in this region, as in Africa, comprises a hybrid of foreign aid, investment, and short and long-term lending. This assistance began with the signing in April 1996 of wide economic and security agreements with Central Asian economies, where Beijing has engineered unique mixes of economic instruments tailored to the particular needs of each one. In 2006, Chinese firms began the building of two oil and gas pipelines from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to China. In 2009, China struck further loans-for-energy deal packages with the energy-rich Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan states, laying the ground for large-scale exploration and production of oil and gas fields. These efforts are similar to the economic ties created in Africa and Latin America, but in this case, they bind vast energy resources from Central Asia eastward to China's borders. Beijing's presence in Central Asia is overwhelming. In Turkmenistan, one the world's largest gas producers, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) is the only foreign company with an onshore contract for oil and gas. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (endowed with less oil and gas), Beijing has become the most significant foreign investor and aid provider, focusing on electric power generation and transmission, as well as the development and improvement of roads and rail networks. Indeed, the Export-Import Bank of China is Tajikistan's largest single creditor with holdings of the country's total foreign debt now projected to reach 70%.

In addition, as China seeks to enhance its energy security, it is reducing its vulnerability via a multi-pronged strategy with potentially far-reaching consequences. This is being achieved via both the acquisition of foreign oil and gas fields but also via a series of long-sought infrastructure and pipeline agreements with neighboring countries, to assure steady flows of oil and gas directly to China. To the extent that Beijing is successful in turning countries to become mostly exclusive suppliers, it almost certainly will affect the capacity of world energy markets to respond to shortages with flexibility. China has invested heavily in the Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Beijing is building power plants in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. And in a significant sign of a shift in

the geopolitical landscape, in December 2009, the Chinese President Hu Jintao and his counterparts in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan marked the opening of a new 1,100 mile gas pipeline which runs from Kazakhstan's central Karaganda region to China's northwest Xinjiang region through all three Central Asian states. In fact, the successful start of this gas pipelineis an indication of the seriousness on yet another - even longer - pipeline, the planned 3,000 kilometre project linking the Caspian Sea hydrocarbon deposits to China.

## The Turkmenistan Gambit: Displacing Traditional Regional Power

It is important to assess China's presence in the Central Asia region not just in terms of its desire to access energy but as a truly transformational factor in changing the nature of the region's economic potential, one which no other regional or global power is in a position to replicate.

China now acts as the dominant catalyst to unlock the prospects of the Central Asian nations. A perfect example is Turkmenistan, which has never been able to take advantage of more open markets and the ability to diversify the production and sale of its natural resources. Thus far, under the Russian influence, Turkmen gas has been directly sold to Russia's Gazprom, which in turn has been able to re-export it to European markets earning revenues at beneficial market prices. This has relegated Turkmenistan to a subservient status but has also not allowed it to open up its economic potential. In November of 2011, Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov was invited to Beijing where he struck a new deal to supply China with 65 million cubic meters of natural gas a year.[32] This would be about half of China's 2010 total gas consumption. Many saw this deal as a coup by Turkmenistan at the expense of Russia. Indeed, Russia has long sought larger deals to export gas to China. Now with Ashgabat providing this level of supply, it makes Russia's demands more challenging. Many observers stated that Turkmenistan had executed a coup against Russia. However, the actual fact is that this is not a coup by Ashgabat, but a shrewd move by Beijing in restructuring the chess board in Central Asia and in advancing her continued efforts to secure its geopolitical position as a future world power. China's move has also allowed Turkmenistan to seek additional diversification away from Russia and with the European Union, which desires to help build the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Europe. Even though China may be pursuing its own interests in securing gas delivery to feed its economic growth, what has been revealed for Turkmenistan in this type of arrangement is unique in its developmental history. By this, Turkmenistan not only reduces its dependence on Russia's old ties but, once endowed with both revenues and improved world class infrastructure, it could seek new mechanisms and develop new markets outside of both Russia and China's spheres, without confrontation with either one. Turkmenistan would acquire the ability, should its leaders desire it, to connect to the broader global markets, including South Asia and the Gulf, and in the process create new opportunities for itself and the concerned nations in these new markets. In this respect, China, above all other power players, is viewed as the most important factor in helping create increased regional economic integration.

**32.** "*China in Deal With Turkmenistan to Boost Gas Supply*", The Wall Street Journal, November 23, 2011

MASOOD AZIZ

## China in Kazakhstan & Tajikistan

The Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-China transit pipeline built to supply China with gas passes through Kazakhstan's territory. Of its total 1,830 kilometres, 1,115 kilometres are in Kazak territory. Kazakhstan is also building a dedicated pipeline addition to export its own gas to China.[33] As such, Kazakhstan is now a major contributor to China's energy security strategy. China's efforts to engage Kazakhstan started with the establishment, in 2007, of a joint venture between Trans-Asia Gas Pipeline, a Chinese firm and Kazakhstan's Kaztransgaz, which is actually a fully-owned subsidiary of China's National Petroleum Corporation and Kazakhstan's national owned firm, KazMunaiGaz. This arrangement is important as it establishes China's firm hold on the Caspian basin, assuring the delivery of its resources eastward and at the expense of others, such as Russia, seeking to access the same resources. In this sense, the geostrategic aspect of these pipelines is far reaching as they leave little to no volume available for other trans-Caspian pipelines going westward. The implications for both Europe and Russia are considerable, especially as demand continues to increase in Asia.

Although both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are certainly energy-rich, there is another example explaining why China's presence in Central Asia is not bound by energy alone.

The Chinese strategy seems to look ahead in the future to forge both economic and political ties in the present, which in turn, may serve it better in the years to come. This longer-term approach for results is often unlike strategies pursued by other global powers desiring to operate in the region. Even though Tajikistan is the poorest nation in Central Asia, China has sought to assist its neighbour, with whom it shares borders linking them to Afghanistan and Pakistan, via making investments with few obvious strings attached. Although the ADB has also attempted to fund road projects, it is often Chinese efforts which achieve the type of results most appreciated by Dushanbe. Working via the SCO, China secured funding for Tajikistan to build roads linking Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Dushanbe sees the immediate benefits of these infrastructures spurring its own links in trade and exchanges across the region. At the same time, China brings benefits to Tajikistan and the region by serving its own longer-term views of the future in the region. In this sense, it also sees benefits from potential rail connections from China through Kyrgyzstan and northern Tajikistan passing via Afghanistan to reach the Indian Ocean ports, including Gwadar in Pakistan and Bandar Abbas in Iran. Although Beijing understands that these rail routes in Tajikistan may not have immediate economic paybacks, it appears to calculate that with the eventual development of Afghanistan, trade networks connecting northern territories via Afghanistan as well as going east to China and Pakistan and west to Iran will be critical. China may end up not only benefiting from a new bustling Central Asian regional trading hub, but also as being seen as a true partner to the nations of the wider region. Although not immediately apparent, while Beijing is seeking to extend its geopolitical writ (and seemingly not gaining in the short-term), it is, more than any other entity, contributing significantly to economic integration in this region.

**33.** *"China deepens Central Asia role"*, Zabikhulla S Saipov, Asia Times, September 25, 2012

**Changing the Geostrategic Plane: One Pipeline & the Telling Demise of TAPI**

At the SCO summit in Beijing on June 8, 2012, President Hu Jintao of China met with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to discuss regional and bilateral agreements. As part of the discussion, the Chinese advanced a proposal to build a Turkmenistan-northern Afghanistan-Tajikistan-China gas pipeline.[34] This pipeline, if built, has the potential of changing the energy and geopolitical dynamics in the region in ways not envisioned by external observers. Feasibility studies led by China's National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) are underway and the proposal is due to also cover oil and gas exploration by CNPC in Afghanistan's north.

To add context, the proposal for the new Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan-China pipeline is in addition to talks the Chinese have had with Kyrgyzstan, where another pipeline could be built, which would go through Kyrgyzstan, to reach China and to deliver Turkmen gas. Geopolitics are at play in many ways here:

i.   Firstly, the availability of Turkmen gas would help reduce, if not end, Kyrgyzstan's complete dependence on supplies from Uzbekistan, with which it has had disagreements as covered earlier.
ii.  In addition, China would earn Bishkek's trust as such a pipeline could be leveraged to create closer links between Kyrgyzstan's internal north and south.
iii. With these agreements, if fully carried out, Beijing's reach is further extended over the wider region, because the countries of Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are in great need of gas supplies.
iv.  These three countries would also gain significantly from the construction of the pipeline itself - and more importantly, from the transit revenues.

It is worthwhile noting here, that contrary to China, powerful Western nations have pursued efforts to help build pipelines connecting Central Asia to the outside markets for over 20 years, without completing a even single one. This is not due to lack of effort. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, US energy companies were encouraged to help connect Central Asia to Europe and South Asia, in order to mitigate Russia's influence in the region. Attempts were made to build pipelines, including one known as Nabucco (planned to go from the Caspian Sea reserves linking Turkmenistan to Turkey and Europe via Azerbaijan). As Nabucco did not go anywhere, recently the name was changed to "Nabucco West" for a pipeline starting in Azerbaijan leaving Turkmenistan out. "Nabucco West" would supply an alternative source of gas to European nations, helping mitigate Europe's dependence on Russian gas supplies. However, "Nabucco West" has still not been built, despite discussions and evaluations which originally started in 1991.

With the new Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan-China proposal, the Chinese have dropped a proverbial "bomb" on the geopolitics of the entire region.

This arrangement has deep and broad economic and geopolitical consequences, and is in line with a semblance of a grand strategy

**34.** "*China, Afghanistan in strategic partnership*", China Daily, June 8, 2012, http://usa.china-daily.com.cn/china/2012-06/08/content_15489351.htm

MASOOD AZIZ

pursued both in the region and across the globe. It is also reflective of how Beijing is poised to change the nature of geopolitics in the region and another indication of China's rise and growing influence over the political climate both in the region and globally.

First, the new pipeline proposal immediately puts at risk the long-discussed but never-realised US-backed TAPI pipeline. TAPI was supposed to go through Afghanistan's east and south, where the Taliban are most active, before ending in Pakistan and eventually in India. The new branch of the Chinese pipeline would only traverse northern Afghanistan, which is much more stable. As mentioned, TAPI has been recently resuscitated by the United States as part of its "New Silk Road" strategy, hoping to dissipate and turn around the uncertain security. Herein lies a fundamental difference between the US and Chinese approaches. The US' pursuit of the "New Silk Road" strategy appears to be – at best - a political proposal. Not only has the US not demonstrated the ability to provide the financing to back its "New Silk Road", but has also not been able to secure funding for the TAPI, either over the years or on the occasion of this "brand new" strategy.

Second, and by contrast, Beijing's approach to its involvement in Central Asia, whether for energy pipelines or other infrastructure building, has been to provide a "packaged" approach, inclusive of loan-for-energy funding, road projects, and other incentives. In this sense, not only is China displacing other powers such as the US and Russia, as well as international organisations such as the World Bank and the IMF, but in the process, it can begin to claim credit for helping facilitate regional integration, where other powers have fallen short.

**The Consequences for Pakistan & India**

The Afghanistan-China pipeline proposal by Beijing has important consequences for Pakistan and India. In July 2012, India suffered the largest electricity outage in history leaving over 670 million Indians without power. The Afghanistan-China pipeline, if built, would also leave India without access to the much-needed gas from Turkmenistan. If TAPI is not built it might create yet another opportunity for Pakistan as a result, and shift the regional geopolitical map once again. Pakistan is now in a position to push on renewing discussions on building the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline. During the June 2012 SCO meeting, Pakistan discussed resuming considerations for the IPI with Iran's President Ahmadinejad, and there are indications that support for IPI funding may be forthcoming from China. Understandably, the US does not support the IPI, let alone the prospect of losing its influence with its ally Pakistan and setting back the TAPI efforts.

The Chinese demarche to pursue the Afghanistan-China pipeline arrangement also may have rather devastating consequences for Russia, which has been in negotiation to provide additional gas supplies to China from its massive Siberian gas fields. However, as the Turkmen gas supplies to China increase from its current flows, gas would be delivered to China at much lower negotiated prices, due to China's role as financer of the existing Turkmenistan-China pipelines. As the new proposal would augment gas flows to China, similar

arrangements would be struck and gas prices would have similar arrangements. In this sense, Russia may be losing twice over, as it not only is not able to get access to Turkmen gas for its own benefit, but would also have to deal with extremely competitive prices, as China's involvement has now altered gas prices in the region.

Clearly, China has the ability to actually build the energy pipelines planned and has demonstrated its aptitude in forging closer relations with the nations in question. As a result, Beijing can be seen as the necessary partner in spurring integration in the region. While the TAPI has always been closer to a dream than to reality, China has built the pipelines it has sought to build. In this sense, China's arrival within this region has rippling consequences and is affecting the global balance of power.

Finally, what we are observing is that China's rise in many parts of the world, and in particular in the Central and South Asia region, is a demonstration that - contrary to common belief - economics may indeed be driving politics. At the same time, many of the challenges of this region lie in deep political and historic mistrust where leadership personalities and corrupt officials often prevail over national affairs. The examination of China's emerging global role demonstrates that when it comes to relations with the Central and South Asia nations, developing ties based on forging the instrumentalisation necessary to carry out its strategies, building trust with the leadership of each nation, investing in supporting trade and commercial exchanges and seeking to focus on enhancing economic development, may re-define both the economic and political planes in ways seldom possible by other participants, especially the US and the EU. This approach places China front and central as the most powerful nation in the region.

## 6. Conclusions

The Central and South Asia regions cannot be adequately examined without thoroughly understanding the upcoming dominance that China is now poised to exercise over the entire area. Any strategic conception or efforts along the political, economic, security and social dimensions pursued by small or larger actors, by state and non-state actors or by multilateral organisations, cannot be successfully achieved if China's historic ascendance in the region is not fully integrated within policy design and along global, regional and bilateral engagements.

Much of the region under review is mired in both political and economic challenges, including ever-present threats in the Afghanistan-Pakistan axis; tense relations between India and Pakistan; and the significant structural economic challenges exhibited as the principal characteristics of the Central Asian nations. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the heavy presence of the US and EU in Afghanistan via NATO's engagement, has not produced the basis for sustainable economic development, nor has it engendered mechanisms to spur economic integration between Central and South Asia.

In undertaking a systematic review of the major forces at play and their geopolitical significance, a central goal of this examination was

to elucidate the underlying dominant factors most responsible for realising the type of economic integration often desired for the region. In this respect, China has now emerged as the most potent power and the indisputable leading actor in facilitating regional economic integration across these territories. It appears that Beijing has ascended to this role, as an actor endowed with far more potent geopolitical instrumentalisation. In the pursuit of better understanding and assessing the geopolitics of economic integration within the region, it is also apparent that the US, EU, and Russia, often viewed as the sole active dominant forces in world affairs, have not been successful in extending their writ over the region by crafting strategies to spur sustainable political and economic stability. In addition, many of the regional schemes promoted as agents of effective economic integration have not produced concrete results, during the past three decades. Through its extensive, region-wide investments, strategically building up close relationships with all the nations in the region, China has now emerged as the most potent power and the indisputable leading actor in facilitating regional economic integration across these territories, and as reflected in its massive emerging global economic dominance, it is now acting as the *de facto* preeminent force over this entire expanded region. These political and economic advances are creating the conditions for a type of regional integration not envisioned previously by other major global actors - even displacing multilateral organisations such as the World Bank, the IMF and the ADB.

In this respect, it is China's investments in roads, extensive pipeline networks, infrastructure and trade, which now need be seen as the dominant facilitators of economic growth in the region. In this sense, it is rather intriguing to observe that Beijing's execution of its regional activities, while helping to increase economic independence in Central Asian nations - i.e., readying the playing field - is now emerging as conceivably the principal factor paving the way for Afghanistan to act as a land bridge and advance these countries' interests in seeking markets in South Asia, while at the same time fulfilling its destiny in realising the new supply-demand equitation now emerging in the region. Although Beijing may not readily admit to such a grand strategy, there is a recognition that very little China does is without some strategic consequences.

Even though China's influence over this region is now almost total, this is not the story of China's rise alone. For Central Asian countries, as a result of the recently acquired basis for economic independence - which can only fully emerge by unlocking the potential of these new assets with the involvement of Afghanistan - the nations of this region are now emerging, and genuinely bestowed, with a whole host of new capabilities, opportunities and options at their disposal, in order to undertake a series of demarches in pursuit of their own national interests. The policy implications of the above are far-reaching for the traditional major powers – the US, EU and Russia.

The United States' relations with Asia are now evolving and changing at a rapid pace. While it was able to better fare - and even benefit from - the rise of allies such as Japan, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, China's ascendance requires new thinking by policymakers, as it redefines and questions the United States' position as a global leader in ways it has never been challenged previously.

It is clear too that China is not going to be an ordinary superpower. Despite its global ascendance, Beijing's own domestic concerns, such as social stability, the sustainability of its economic growth and cohesion across its internal territories may define its relations with the outside as much as its international activities. Contrary to many observers, including in the US, who view the relationship through the perspective of offensive realism or power transition and may expect a more confrontational relationship with China, there is in fact another perspective. Viewing the advances achieved via the benefits of economic interdependence within the globalised system indicates that the high costs of conflict may in fact prevent both China and the US from engaging in antagonism. As such, instead of building their naval and security infrastructure, especially in the South China Sea, both countries should invest in furthering their economic ties, in particular to advance economic integration in the region of Central and South Asia.

Russia's position has been nothing short of cataclysmic when it comes to China's rise in this region. However, it still retains influence within its former domain. Despite China's new hold over many relations in the region, most of the leadership in this area does not want to be wholly dependent on Beijing. Russia still enjoys historic and cultural ties with Central Asia, (although some are now strained). Moscow woke up to the arrival and the extent of China's rise in the region when it was hit by the 2008 financial crisis. This deeply affected the Russian economy, but China was not hit with nearly the same force. This allowed Beijing to continue its economic and financial advances in the region, a reflection of the instrumentalisation of its foreign policy strength. In effect, post-financial crisis, China was using lower international prices to effectuate a takeover, not just in Central Asia - Russia's backyard - but also in Africa and Latin America.

In this sense, the acceleration of the global balance of power in China's favour is now Russia's greatest foreign policy challenge. Russia would need to find alternative means of pursuing its interests. One such approach would be to execute a strategy to advance further economic opening on its eastern shores to support and increase ties with China, but also to benefit from the explosive growth experienced by the South East Asia region. Russia would be ill-advised to pursue its efforts within the CSTO to further distance itself from China. In addition, it is now understood that Russia's pursuit and establishment of the Eurasia Union is due to its concerns about China's rise. Again, this initiative would, on the margin, provide meagre benefits for Moscow, but it would not reduce or stop China's ascendance as a world power. Russia is endowed with great natural resources and is geographically well placed to not only supply energy to feed China's economic growth, but to also cultivate much closer ties in trade, by building additional overland connections to China, expanding commercial exchanges, and joining forces in South and East Asia to promote more integrated markets.

The EU is falling far behind other actors when it comes to this region. Although its first priority is to attend to its serious economic crisis, Brussels would need to re-engage itself in the region to assure Europe's economic survival in the 21st century. The EU is dangerously dependent on Russia for energy. Diversifying and securing its energy supply is reason alone for a deeper engagement in this region. Importantly, it

would be advisable to continue to act as a block in assuring that a European voice is heard on the issues of governance, human rights and on supporting the building of democratic institutions. No other global power can claim a better position on these issues. Although promoting democratic structures would certainly be preferable, European efforts need to be designed to take account of each particular country's developmental stage. Pushing for elections alone can sometimes be unproductive and backfire. Focusing on market-building initiatives may instead empower entrepreneurship and a budding middle class, which can in turn assure better accountability from the elite class. China is certainly following a track based on the economic influence of state leaders. However, Europe can forge its own path, which would assure that the forces of economic development can help lead political openings and in doing so, perhaps build a better model than that of China. After all, this process was what created wealth and engendered stability in Europe over the centuries, as economic empowerment led the merchant classes to demand increased political rights. None the less, to do so, the EU would need to become much closer to the region: it needs to develop more commercial exchanges and cultural ties, and have a local presence, including a heightened diplomatic representation, especially in Central Asia where this has been limited or absent.

# Afterword

There is a new global battle for world dominance underway. It is redefining the world's future development model based on strategies promoting economic growth and integration. We are now witnessing the new Great Game in real-time, where countries across the globe will choose between the new Chinese model and the Western model led by the EU and US.

In 2013, President Xi of China announced a $64 billion initiative for infrastructure development, followed in 2015 by a $46 billion project called "One Belt, One Road." These are massive investments designed to promote growth and achieve economic integration in Central Asia, and to link China, Central and South Asia, and Europe with a network of roads, rail, and maritime routes. The strategy is poised not only to create economic and geopolitical ripples across Eurasia, but to offer a future global development model to the rest of the world.

The U.S. and Europe have had over 15 years in Afghanistan and its region to realize security and economic stability. However, after billions spent, their models have not succeeded in achieving their goals. And now, we have ISIS not only creeping into this region, but also creating havoc in the Middle-East and a migration nightmare for Europe.

Between 1990s and 2014, U.S. economic and military assistance to the five states of Central Asia, including Afghanistan, totaled to less than $6.5 billion (constant dollars), and now all but stopped. As a result, today the region gravitates increasingly toward the Chinese political and economic orbit. At the same time, despite Russia's saber rattling recently, the repercussions of its aggression in Ukraine, and especially its deep economic troubles will make its influence even smaller in light of the emergence of China's behemoth presence.

China's new strategy under One Belt, One Road represents a remarkable departure in Chinese global policy. For the first time, China is seeking to export its development model to other countries – and is now launching this strategy in the very heard of Asia—in Central Asia. Unlike what has transpired both in Europe and in the US which have neglected it for decades, China will pursue massive state-led investments in infrastructure – roads, railways, ports, electricity, and airports – that facilitate extensive industrial development and economic integration, and establish a new global model.

The only question for geopolitics and the future of economic development is simple: Whose model will prevail?

**Masood Aziz**
2016

# CONCLUSION:
# THE WAY FORWARD

*Emma Hooper, Malaiz Daud, Gabriel Reyes Leguen, Roberto Toscano*

# CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD

**Emma Hooper, Malaiz Daud,
Gabriel Reyes Leguen, Roberto Toscano,**

External interventions as well as regional and global rivalries continue to play out in various manifestations of the contemporary "Great Game", in the territory that covers present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan. The key change witnessed in the present decade has been the extent to which conflicts further afield are affecting regional dynamics, and which impact on both countries' relations with their neighbours, as well as on those with the five key regional powers focused upon in this project.

The fundamental interests and goals of external players vis à vis the Afghan situation have not changed since 2011. However, their context has, inducing policy shifts that pertain to tactics rather than strategy. The question therefore arises as to what extent do these shifts allow us to imagine that "sources of tension" can be gradually transformed into "sources of détente" - or less ambitiously, as a possible "way forward"?

Most, if not all, of the sources of tension identified at the early stages of the STAP-RP remain as such, five years on, because their root causes – national rivalries, violence, poverty and weak governance in particular - have yet to be effectively tackled. In that sense, the strengthening and expansion of the writ of the state in both Afghanistan and Pakistan will be vital to ensuring domestic and regional stability.

Whilst the drivers of change are domestic, in contrast to 2011, the catalysts for upheaval are now extra-regional.

The - at times - tense relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan themselves remains critical too in this regard.  Bound to one another, yet strongly disliking this inter-dependency, as of summer 2016 the potential for meaningful cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan seems significantly reduced, relative to a year earlier. None the less, like it or not, Pakistan is essential to solving the Afghanistan situation, in this complex relationship that is simultaneously based on an undeniable reality, but also founded on profound mutual misunderstandings, mistrust and lack of communication on the respective countries´ motivations vis à vis one another.

## Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, the creation of a stable state remains elusive as of the time of writing.

In this ongoing "decade of transformation", the country is still a fragile state and remains far from being capable of achieving self-reliance without continued external assistance. The level and nature of that assistance will depend on Kabul's capacity to tackle corruption, improve its capacity to deliver services across the country, secure income generation beyond international aid, and to find a political solution to the current conflict – thus freeing the state from the heavy burden of sustaining an expensive military apparatus. In all, a state facing considerable challenges, therefore.

Yet, despite this fragility, post-Taliban Afghanistan does have a state, and one that is based on democratic principles, despite weak institutions. There is a growing realisation of the need to address the electoral process, because elections are the mainstay of contested power in the country. This delicate democracy faces internal and external challenges from both Islamic extremists and groups that see the opportunity to accede to power through democratic means. The present broad coalition of political groups, civil society and allies is key to sustaining democracy, and preventing its sacrifice to armed resistance. Gains made, such as freedom of expression, the growth of civil society and its organisations, media expansion, and the inclusion of women in development, need to be safeguarded against the opposition that they face from Islamist and traditional constituencies in Kabul politics. The rhetoric of the main political constituencies has become more and more neutral in terms of ethnicity. So far, the Kabul political system has managed to mediate ethnic tensions and avoid the emergence of any ethnic-based challenge to the government.

None the less, from the Afghan side, at present, there is a litany of problems stemming from the existing political setup in Kabul.[1] These include: factionalism, disfunctionality, strong differences around approaches to patronage and (failed) attempts at institution-building. These have both considerable implications for how to handle the conflict, and undermine the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces, on which the state′s survival in its present form depends.

Those challenging that state, the Taliban, have not only proved to be extremely resilient, capable of maintaining a sustained military momentum, and of extending their control over a large swathe of Afghan territory. However, this military strength is combined with political difficulties. These include: maintaining cohesiveness of the movement after the loss of both its original leader and his successor: persuading people of the legitimacy of the armed *jihad* in the wake of the departure of the main US/NATO force; controlling the ambition of *jihadists* like Al Qaeda, which are in alliance with the Taliban; and coping with the vastly superior military resources available to the Afghan government.

The continued insurgency in the country and the faltering of the latest Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) mechanism mean that a

1. See STAP RP report of interviews in Kabul in April 2016, in which interviewees emphasise this discontent.

political settlement remains elusive. None the less, unless the Taliban enter into peace talks, violent resistance will continue. And the longer the current Afghan state survives, the greater is the chance that it may become more resilient. The only hope for a solution to the conflict therefore is to further strengthen regional and international efforts to impress on all parties involved in the conflict – directly or indirectly – that there should be consequences for anyone fomenting conflict; and/ or the regional powers could resolve to ensure that the government in Kabul should not be overthrown by force.

Economically, Afghanistan remains heavily dependent on foreign aid, but also on the illicit trade of narco-trafficking. The country will need to seriously focus on generating domestic sources of revenue to support state expenditures and to provide employment opportunities for its citizens. There have been some recent encouraging signs, particularly on the regional front: (for instance, the TAPI, CASA 1000, the Salma Dam and the Chabahar Transit Route Agreement). Arguably, transit and connectivity (but not mining) remain the only realistic options for realising self-sufficiency in the short to medium term. However, the counterpoint to this is that narratives of negativity remain: Pakistan television has been showing evidence of increased Indian involvement in the region as a threat, not as a positive development.

In order to make progress, hope for the future lies in an effective response by the Kabul government to contain and eventually put an end to insurgency. This will include undermining the Taliban´s confidence that they will prevail. At present, the prospect for the continuation of the conflict is a very real one. Political approaches put forward which focus on obtaining a political solution, will lose both credibility and the ability for a degree of "joined up" decision making in Kabul - critical for their success - if the Kabul institutional setup remains dysfunctional on governance, but good at rent-extraction and highly factionalised. The conflict therefore still goes on.

It is clear that simply leaving Afghanistan to its own devices will most certainly put at risk - or even reverse - the limited peace and state-building progress achieved of the past 15 years. This must be avoided. Emphasis on further burden-sharing will be key in that sense. New modalities of support, mainly a combination of remote assistance – both economic and military - from the West, and hands-on political and economic intervention by the main regional powers (Russia and China), will need to be explored in the light of the West's disengagement. This will require stronger and truly inclusive cooperation between the regional powers and the West in a context of growing competition. It will also require assistance with establishing confidence-building processes between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

So, what would it really take for a settlement to be reached between the Afghan state and the Taliban? Anatol Lieven recently suggested that to achieve this, (i) the US needs to make clear it is determined to keep troops in Afghanistan to avoid state collapse and a Taliban victory; (ii) that the Taliban would recognise it will never be granted full control over the country; (iii) that Pakistan brings to bear real pressure on the Taliban to agree to a reasonable settlement; and (iv) that the Kabul government can come up with an acceptable peace

EMMA HOOPER, MALAIZ DAUD, GABRIEL REYES LEGUEN, ROBERTO TOSCANO

offer. Unfortunately, it is considered that point three is unlikely to occur, and even point four is moot, being a reflection of only one view of the way forward.

## Pakistan

In mid-2016, the question arises of whether the current Pakistan approach towards Afghanistan is sustainable, or whether it has reached its limits in terms of "what can be got away with".

This approach consists of three main components:

i. *The internal security approach* which aims to reduce or minimise violence within Pakistan itself via persuasion or cooption of the perpetrators, to join the side of the positive, or to obliterate them.
ii. The "*business as usual diplomacy*" - the maintenance of regional and international relations, via a dialogue of positive engagement with Kabul, the US and others.
iii. *Projecting its power over Afghanistan via the support of proxies* engaged in *jihad*, regardless of what the latter are aiming to achieve.

However, all three approaches leave many questions hanging, and lead to a focus on actual actions, rather than strategic intention. The components of the latter continue with *status quo ante*, with public indications on the Afghan war depending on safe havens in Pakistan, and a lack of serious measures against - and at times, actual support for - the Afghan Taliban, emanating from Pakistan. Within Pakistan itself, there is dislike, and questioning of this intention.[2] None the less, tragically there is no actual accountability for those who run strategic intent and thus the political debate, such as it is, remains oblique and mainly confined to journalists editorials.

The key question therefore, is can Pakistan maintain these three contradictory stances going forward?

From the Taliban´s perspective, the movement´s leadership is committed to sustaining the conflict and hence to recapturing power in Afghanistan. It will therefore continue to fight until this goal is reached – unless the power balance is substantively changed. At present, the insurgency is destablising, because it is coming close to potentially toppling the Kabul government. Even if Pakistan´s support were a sufficient condition for keeping the insurgency at its current dangerous level, there have also been tactical statements issued reflecting the balancing act being played around Pakistan being able to influence the Taliban but not guarantee their behaviour, that are mainly directed at minimising US pressure on Pakistan, possibly also indicating concern for its loss of influence in Afghanistan.[3]

Ironically, perhaps the most affected group of internal stakeholders (with whom the Taliban are already known to have dealings) are the most marginalised, voiceless and constrained in their exercise of agency. These are the approximately 5 million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. Squeezed between a rock and a hard place, since 2004 (the Constitutional Loya Jirga) they have no formal access to political participation, whether in

2. See STAP RP Pakistan focus group discussions report, March 2016

3. As an example of this, Sartaj Aziz, a senior member of Pakistan's federal cabinet in-charge of Foreign Affairs publicly stated In comments at Washington's Council on Foreign Relations think tank on March 1 2016, that that Pakistan has been hosting senior Taliban leaders, and that consequently it had "significant influence" on the movement. Aziz added that Islamabad had pressured Afghan Taliban leaders to participate in the first-ever direct talks with the Afghan government on July 7, 2015.

Pakistan or in Afghanistan, though reportedly informal channels remain open. This is an important population, for a number of reasons, including because the presence of *Tehrik e Taliban e Pakistan* (TTP) militants in Afghanistan is still an important consideration for the Pakistan army in its dealings on Afghanistan. Going forward, exploring the scope for the refugee population to become part of the solution rather than the problem, and how this may contribute to peacemaking, will be critical.

## The Regional Players & the Changing Situation

With the withdrawal of US and Western troops, the region is left to cope with an increasingly violent Afghanistan, uncertain US politics and hedging behaviour by countries in the region. Iran, for instance, has recently become active in applying such strategies, although it would in fact gain from a stabilised Afghanistan. The greater the uncertainty over stability, the greater the hedging strategies that will be applied across the region.

In fact, Iranian policy toward Afghanistan has always transcended both revolutionary ideology and religious sectarianism. For instance, throughout the *jihad* era of the 80s, Tehran cultivated Shia groups justified by the revolutionary ideology of *vilayat e faqih*, yet also maintained Sunni partners too. Iran has focused on the very "classical" goals of minimizing dangers (US encirclement) and burdens (illegal Afghan refugees on Iranian territory: now at 1.4 million), while maximizing geo-political influence. For Iran, the novel presence of ISIS /Da´esh (or its affiliated groups) in Afghanistan is particularly worrying - so much so that Tehran may be now considering the Taliban as lesser enemies, with whom it is possible to have limited cooperation, or a tacit non-aggression pact. This supplies an insight into the reasons for the visits to Iran by Mullah Mansoor, killed on his way back from the Iran border.[4]

Other external players such as Russia and China (see further below) are stepping up their support to the Kabul government. International anti-Taliban hostility is not as unconditional as it used to be. Iran and Russia have both established channels of communication - if not cooperation - with the Taliban. They are also showing interest in promoting a peace process on which Pakistan has failed to deliver, mainly due to its own ambiguities on the protagonists.

Saudi Arabia is, in 2016, a much less present regional power in both countries than it was in 2011. Its influence is expressed in funding for *madrassas*, mosques, and the Wahhabi-influenced religiosity in Pakistan. This remains, including because of Saudi Arabia´s proxy war with Iran, which is being played out across several regions. Distracted at present by geopolitical events outside the South and Central Asia region, particularly in Syria and Yemen, Saudi Arabia is also facing its own domestic economic problems. As the project closes, it therefore remains an interested, but a less engaged stakeholder, albeit with strong links to the Pakistan *ulema*.

Geopolitical competition with China, together with the need to prevent the growth of Islamist radicalism in Central Asia, has been the main driving factor of Russia's Afghan policy. What is striking now however is that while competition remains, there is a certain convergence between

**4.** There is an interesting historical precedent here. In the aftermath of the 2001 US attack on Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, several mid-to-high level Al Qaeda individuals tried to escape through Iran and were detained their status was a half-way house between prisoners and guests. Iranian officials let it be known that on the one hand Tehran, fearing terror operations in their own territory, did not want to provoke Al Qaeda and on the other, the prisoners/guests could be used – as probably some actually were – in quid-pro-quo secret deals. This did not make the Islamic Republic an ally or supporter of Al Qaeda, but rather proved the Iranian regime's opportunism.

EMMA HOOPER, MALAIZ DAUD, GABRIEL REYES LEGUEN, ROBERTO TOSCANO

Russia and China in the decision to support the Kabul government. This lies not in the unrealistic hope of a total defeat of the Taliban, but rather, via preventing the defeat of the central government and inducing the Taliban to enter a peace process based on compromise.

China has spearheaded efforts to reinvent the Silk Road through regional integration. This will be key for the future stability of both countries. But China will face the same daunting obstacles that the West has been dealing with in the past decade and a half. The success - or failure - of its vision of a truly functional "*One belt, One road*" will depend on the stability and sustainability of the Afghan and Pakistani states, among other. Only time will tell if Beijing's political craftsmanship, patience and economic progress will allow the Asian giant to steer the region towards cooperation and stability. China has, without doubt, a strong vested geopolitical and above all, economic interest in maintaining stability in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. One such example is that of relative restraint shown by both on recent border clashes (despite lives lost). It will consequently most likely continue working accordingly.

In the final analysis, despite all of the above, the positive changes needed for each country and for the region to reach their full potential will have to come from within. As recent state and peace-building experiences show, external actors can only catalyse positive change, not impose it. The onus is therefore on Kabul and Islamabad themselves to consolidate their respective states in order to bring stability to their immediate neighbourhood. Should they fail to do so, China's connectivity projects will remain elusive.

## The Way Forward

The vulnerability of the region to external negative influences will be proportional to the strength of the states that comprise it. As long as Afghanistan and Pakistan remain fragile states, conflict will thrive and their respective exposure to proxy confrontation will be dangerously high. This is particularly the case of Pakistan whether in the context of the multi-front conflict with India, the forty year old and ongoing political and security situations in FATA and Baluchistan or the steady increase in the Shia-Sunni divide. But Afghanistan is, and will be, no less vulnerable to external distorting elements, from the military calculations of both India and Pakistan - but also to those of Russia vis à vis the perceived threat of non state actors in the "*soft underbelly of the empire*"- as well as to Saudi-Iranian competition for influence in the Muslim world. Sustainable state-building and good governance hold the key to stability of both Afghanistan and Pakistan and of the region as a whole.

Supporting the survival of the Kabul government seems now to have become a point of convergence of practically all external players – including those in Europe – following the realisation that their original preferred option of a self-sustaining, robust, democratic Afghan state cannot realistically be attained, at least in the short to medium term. This convergence on the part of external actors would seem to bode well for the future.

However, once again it is seen that, whilst external players can play a role, in no way can they compensate for the fragility of the nation-state that they intend to support and strengthen. A hard lesson learned, after billions of dollars spent and thousands of casualties incurred. However, this lesson is difficult to translate into an actual shift in policy, because the economic and military unsustainability of the Kabul government still requires the continuation of a military presence in-country. The jury is still out on whether this should or should not be indefinite or open-ended: many critics of President Obama´s strategy towards Afghanistan have argued that the approach of setting timetables emboldened the opposition, whilst other analysts suggest that there should be an explicit undertaking that the military presence will not be there for more than a (defined) period.

India-Pakistan relations are one of the main external factors determining the prospects for Afghan stabilization and for the viability of the Afghan state. Pakistan´s deep interest in and complex relations with India stemming from the time of Partition contribute to the persistence of an existential threat narrative on the part of the latter. India´s relations with Afghanistan have a long history (as is the case for Pakistan). An improved India-Pakistan relationship going forward could lead to a positive regional impact. However, despite some political changes in Delhi and Islamabad, the basic policy of both countries toward Afghanistan has not significantly altered. For India, geo-economics has always had a significant dimension, together with geo-political (and especially security) considerations, which in turn determine the country´s policies, alliances, and longer-term strategies. Competition between the ports of Chabahar and Gwadar is a fact, and India clearly intends to be very active – together with both Russia and Iran – in a long-term strategy focusing on energy and trade. If the bilateral relationship with Pakistan were to really change for the better, the new initiatives around transportation routes from China and Central Asia to the Indian Ocean could take off strongly, particularly in the areas of energy and trade. Furthermore, If Pakistan Pakistan ends its support for the Afghan Taliban, India may well see fit to support a power-sharing arrangement in Afghanistan in which the Taliban play a significant role.

However, the problem is that the India-Pakistan relationship is not only dependent on concrete issues – such as the reported ISI support to terrorism in India – but also on the long-term strategic rivalries between the two. This is particularly relevant, given Pakistan's fear that India will take advantage of its overwhelming military and economic superiority to curtail the formers aspiration to geopolitical relevance, including in Afghanistan. As long as Pakistan fears India's intention of using Afghanistan as an asset for its strategic interests, and as long as India is convinced that Pakistan is willing to use the support of home-grown terrorist movements to further its geo-strategic aims, mutual suspicion and rivalry between the two states will continue. This will result in heavy consequences for the future prospects for Afghanistan.

Relationships between states matter. So does geographical proximity. Furthermore, in the complex inter-relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the different, but equally complex relationships between both the latter two and India, the way in which domestic sources of tension play out will make a difference to future outcomes. The domestic

EMMA HOOPER, MALAIZ DAUD, GABRIEL REYES LEGUEN, ROBERTO TOSCANO

impact of the sources of tension certainly matters, but equally so do the geo-strategic interests of the main involved regional powers.

New, emerging sources of tension that will affect bilateral relations, as well as communities, going forward, include those over water management. This is because of the possibility of leading to three potential confrontations: (i) between Iran and Afghanistan; (ii) between the Central Asian states and Afghanistan; between Pakistan and Afghanistan; and (iii) between India and Pakistan. It is likely that the nexus between unresolved water and border disputes in the region, (e.g the Durand Line, the seemingly perennial India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir), and security, will be fault lines with major regional implications. But it is important to note too that they could also equally be turned from challenges into opportunities. In this regard, a future decreased focus on the military dimension in Afghanistan could well lead towards a renewed attention to the economic and socio-political issues that are crucial for a constructive way forward, across the region. None the less, given the current trajectory, this unfortunately does not look likely.