

# DEFENCE AND SECURITY ALERT

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MARCH 2010

Vol.1 Issue 6

## Afghanistan special



- Indo-Afghan relations
- Foreign Investment
- America in Afghanistan
- Liberation in sight?
- Dismantle PAKISTANI fulcrum
- Crucible or cauldron?
- Pak Agenda



○ Kabul

DSA DEFENCE AND SECURITY ALERT

> VOLUME 1 > ISSUE 6 > MARCH 2010



# DSA MISSION

**The power of a King lies in his mighty arms...**

Security of the citizens at peace time is very important because State is the only saviour of the men and women who get affected only because of the negligence of the State.

—Chanakya



In Afghanistan the world faces the greatest reconstruction challenge since the end of the Second World War. The restoration underway isn't merely that of infrastructure, or buildings, but that of a people brutalised by endless violence. The rebuilding is that of a State long subverted by the pastime of regional and global manipulators. Games played by the malignant have spawned a culture of carnage that has spared none in its wake. The regeneration project is for a nation that has long ceased to exercise any semblance of sovereignty in the conduct of its affairs. The citizenry of Afghanistan have stopped being the centre of gravity in the formulation of policies that affect their lives. The fulcrum lies in the skewed ideas of the players of today's great game.

Afghanistan has long been the playground of the invaders, freebooters, and the predatory. The accident of its geography lends itself to this unfortunate footnote in history. Ownership of tracks that led to the riches of India made Afghanistan the favoured highway in history. Invaders and plunderers traversed this land with a frequency that created a psyche of suspicion of the stranger. This nascent insularity has, at the same time, created a mindset that was globalised by commerce. Riches from different regions passed through Afghanistan on the routes of trade. Now the riches move from Afghanistan in the form of contraband, along tracks that also set off terror.

The vacuum of authority created by the chaos of the 1990s was the perfect locale for raising Global Terror Inc. Absence of a State allowed for a seamless marriage between the local and the global nihilist. Modern society faces its greatest structural challenge from the nihilists ejected from power in Kabul, but still determined to return.

The world played its hot and cold wars over the plains and mountains of Afghanistan. And now the world has to undo the damage that it has wrought on the hapless people of this strikingly beautiful land. The rebuilding of the Afghan State is the greatest single challenge that confronts the world at this juncture. Speculators may sour the mood on the markets, but their ilk with the instincts for terror threatens the world far more seriously. Time is running out for the good guys in the game, and any delay in the reconstruction activities emboldens only those with that atavistic worldview. What they can make happen was amply demonstrated on 11 September 2001. Allowing them any opportunity of space will re-ignite bushfires the world over. It is a far greater threat to humanity than a market meltdown.

There is no vacating of space or responsibility in Afghanistan. This is as true for Washington, or Brussels, as it is for New Delhi. Each country has a role to play in the reconditioning project, for the action, or inaction, of each has created the mess that existed in Afghanistan for far too long. In 2001 the world united to remove the messianic from Afghanistan, and less than a decade later the world needs to unite to prevent their return to Kabul. Unity of purpose and vision, is the only way forward. The world owes it to the people of Afghanistan.

manvendra singh

**DSA  
is as  
much  
yours,  
as it is  
ours!**



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Peace is the Key



Another assault on the Peace process. This time on Indians, Europeans and innocent Afghans committed to reconstruction of war-ravaged Afghanistan. Taliban's machinations to disrupt Peace, harmony and development will ultimately fail.

Peace is essential for growth, development and prosperity. No human being can grow without peace of mind and peaceful environment, nor can any civilization. For a country's development and growth, peace is most critical. What we see today is hatred and war which create impediments to growth. Whether we talk of Jammu and Kashmir, north-east or across our borders i.e. Pakistan or Afghanistan - no growth, no development at all in these regions.

Indians born a couple of generations ago still have the story in their minds about a *Kabuliwala*, who used to come to our towns with lots of dry fruits in his bag. Many might have come across such *Kabuliwalas* in their early days. I still remember the famous story '*Kabuliwala*' written by the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore which narrated the life-sketch of Afghans of his time. They used to love children and sell dry fruits to the elders which showed their good and endearing qualities of head and heart and their generosity. Where has that goodness and generosity of these lovable Afghans gone? They have become the Taliban and are shedding blood in Afghanistan and adjoining areas.

It has become essential to handle this situation with stronger and punitive measures. I believe that the Sanskrit shloka - *SHATHE SHATHYAM SAMACHARET* meaning *Tit for Tat* and that "*unjust people have no right to fairness and should be stopped by any means possible*" is apt for the Taliban creating hatred between people and shedding innocent blood. NATO and other forces are doing fairly well to bring peace in Afghanistan and *DSA* has full confidence in their actions which also favours the ancient way of Indian thinking as well as modern Western thinking. *DSA* salutes the defence and security forces and various Indian and international organisations working hard to build a new, progressive and developed Afghanistan. We are sure the latest attack will not derail the Peace process.

Afghanistan, a close neighbour of India is very important and it has a significant geo-political importance also. India as a State and Indian intellectuals and experts are concerned about the welfare of Afghanistan. *DSA* is committed for the cause of defence and security of India and is also concerned about other parts of the globe. Thus, our first effort to bring out a special issue on Afghanistan is in your hands. We are sure that the opinions of various national and international experts on the important subjects related to the growth, development and Peace process in Afghanistan will initiate a thought process culminating in finding a just solution for the Afghan imbroglio and we will have the good fortune of meeting again the loving and lovable *Kabuliwalas*.

Team *DSA* is thankful to all our contributors for extending their great support to our idea of bringing out this special issue on Afghanistan. We are grateful to them. We assure our readers of many such special editions focusing on important and topical subjects and regions impacting defence and security of India and the world.

JAI HIND!

*Pawan Agrawal*  
pawan agrawal



stop press

After months of lull Indians in Afghanistan

were attacked again. Taliban claimed the responsibility. The audacity of the assault questions the mind behind the attack. It seems Pakistan assets in Afghanistan are being employed to create space for it by creating a situation where Indian government is forced to review its stand on Afghanistan.

"I am deeply saddened and grieved at the loss of lives of Indian nationals in the bomb attack in Kabul, which has also claimed the lives of several innocent Afghan civilians. I condemn in the strongest possible terms this senseless act of violence and barbarism which strikes at the core of everything a civilized society holds dear" Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said in his statement condemning the attack. Will someone tell our PM that condemning will not safeguard our brave people? Nor our future.

There have been a number of attacks in Kabul in recent past. Taliban are showing their capability to hit where it hurts the most. The increase in attacks is in retaliation to the offensive launched against Taliban in south and east Afghanistan by NATO forces. These tactics have been employed by all militant organisations across the world, be it LTTE, Jihadi groups in India, northeast insurgents and maoists.

When any offensive is launched or new initiative is taken for talks, militant groups employ these methods to increase their bargaining chips. In this case both the reasons are valid as new offensive is being carried out by NATO and Pakistan is trying to bring a faction of Taliban to the table for talks.

The target in 26 February attack were foreigners who are employed in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. What is more significant is that more than half of the killed are Indians. Was the attack specifically targeted at Indians? It seems so. Recently concluded secretary level talks between Pakistan and India, held in New Delhi finished without any concrete outcome as expected, but the statements coming from Pakistan around the talks, give enough hints that Pakistan is not willing to accept growing Indian influence in Afghanistan. There has been a concerted effort by Pakistan to push India out of the Af-Pak theatre. India is not getting desired applauds from EU and US thanks to Pakistan's machinations. It is high time India started responding in kind to its opponents.

Indian stakes are very high in Afghanistan and we have to protect our interests. The only sensible option is to develop strategic assets in significant regions that can be employed if and when required to give punitive response.

We can talk to Pakistan but simultaneously must develop assets which can be employed to hit them where it hurts them most. Like a Chinese saying "smile on face and stick at back". Pakistan understands that India still doesn't have much support outside government and the influence of Afghanistan government is well known. Thus India is vulnerable till it is well entrenched in Afghanistan. India is training Afghan National Army and this bilateral move is giving Pak generals sleepless nights. And Gen. Kayani's latest offer to train ANA is his reckless reaction. ANA could become India's finest and most lethal asset which can keep Pakistan away from Afghanistan forever, a situation which Pakistan Army will do everything to stall.

International community especially the Western alliance operating in Af-Pak theatre must not postpone calling the Pakistani bluff and saving Afghanistan from an uncertain future.





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info@dsalert.org

- I am pleased to have received copies of your journal “Defence and Security Alert”. I have read with keen interest articles covering a wide range of subjects from ‘Internal Security, Military Preparedness’ to International Affairs. The contents are interesting, informative and stimulating.  
I complement you for the quality of the journal and wish you all success in this laudable initiative.

**S.C. Mehta IPS (Retd.)**  
Member, National Security Advisory Board,  
Government of India, Jaipur

- Thank you very much for letter dtd. 18 January 2010 enclosing the latest issue of DSA. As a person interested in National Security and Defence matters I was greatly impressed by the quality of articles and the issues dealt with, by eminent authors.

I am deeply impressed by the presentation and excellent setup of the Journal. In the Print and Electronic Media, very few people get opportunity to share their views and experience on National Security Matters. DSA fills this void.

**B.V. Kumar IRS (Retd.)**  
Member, Central Board of Excise and Customs,  
Addl. Secy., Govt. of India, Ministry of Finance  
Bangalore

- I found DSA a world class magazine with in-depth research oriented analysis and expert opinions. I am sure that DSA will prove to be a journal which will sharpen the readers thinking and show a path with solution to the problems of India related to defence and security to the policy makers for a safe and secure India.

**V.K. Agrawal**  
IT Consultant, USA

@



Dr. Vedpratap Vaidik

## Indo-Afghan relations: An Indian View

The declaration of President Barack Hussein Obama's Af-Pak policy and the successful conclusion of the London Conference on Afghanistan are a welcome development. They are correct steps in the right direction. However, the current situation in Afghanistan has thrown up several new challenges. It is nearly impossible to wind up the war and stabilize Afghanistan without analyzing these challenges and finding their appropriate answers. First of all, the proposed withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan by July 2011 has provided a sharp focus to the war on terror going on listlessly for the last eight years. George Bush, like the well known character of the Mahabharat War, *Abhimanyu*, did enter the strategic trap (*Chakravyuh*) of Afghanistan but did not know how to wriggle out of it. He and some of his officials had reconciled to the possibility of staying in Afghanistan for at least a decade or so. Obama's bold decision and the firm declaration of the beginning of the withdrawal of the Western forces by July 2011 had a dramatic political impact on the people of Afghanistan. It has hit the very foundation of the resurgence of the Taliban.

### Taliban propaganda

The Taliban acquired ascendancy in the recent past mostly because they were able to convince the Afghan people at large that they are not only fighting for Islam but also for securing the freedom of Afghanistan. The ordinary people do know that their Islam is not much threatened by the presence of foreign forces but they do feel that their national honour and freedom have become a pawn in the hands of the Americans. The age-old Afghan psychological complex against the foreigners (*Firangee*) has been played up quite successfully by the Taliban, especially among the tribal people. The legitimacy of democratically elected government of Hamid Karzai is consistently questioned by them and they do not hesitate to call him the American Babrak Karmal (the Prime Minister, who invited Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979).

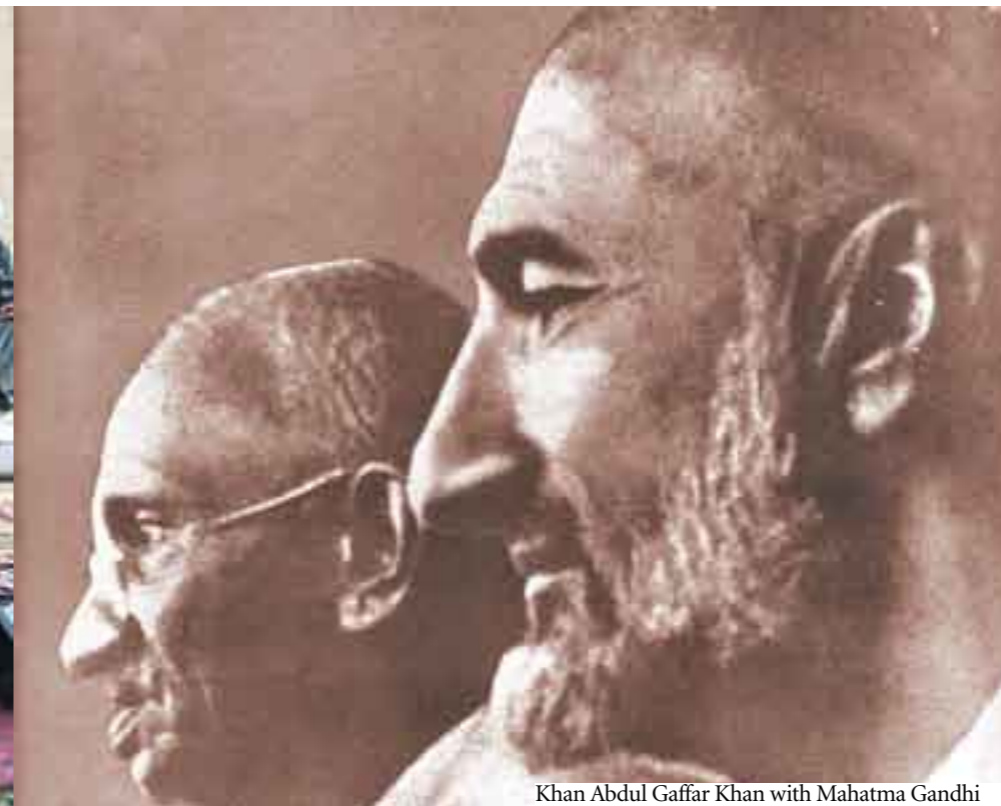
They have spread the word in the entire country that the Americans would never leave because it won't take more than a few hours for Karzai government to sink once the foreign forces left. Now Obama's declaration has punctured this basic myth spread by the Taliban.

### Western morale up

The second fallout of Obama's declaration is the upsurge in the morale of the Western armies. They have entered into the mentality of 'do or die.' They know that they have to leave within next 18 months. If they don't fight earnestly, they will have to leave in disgrace. This will be a severe blow to the Western prestige. Their claims to being a great power will not only be under a shadow, the jihadi terrorists will threaten them in many other parts of the world.



King Zahir Shah



Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan with Mahatma Gandhi

The fighting spirit of the alliance troops has received a new lease of life. An Army which lost the largest number of soldiers last year has bounced back under the leadership of Gen. McChrystal. The alliance operations have achieved notable and dramatic successes recently in the Helmand region. The critics of Obama have been proved wrong.

### Numbers game

However, it is impossible to believe that 1,40,000 soldiers of the Western alliance are enough to eliminate the Taliban and bring about an era of peace and stability in Afghanistan. If almost 1,00,000 Western soldiers were unable to make any difference in Afghanistan, how will a few thousand more be able to bring about a sea change in the anarchic Afghanistan. The Western soldiers are not accustomed to fight one on one as they have to in Afghanistan. They are more dependent on advanced weaponry. They are not well-versed in the topography of the land nor do they understand the local languages. The ordinary people are afraid of supporting them openly. They lack proper intelligence to carry out swift operations and they hardly have proper coordination with the local Afghan army.

### Quantum leap

The increase of 30,000 troops is welcome but it is too little and too late. Afghanistan needs an army of at least 5,00,000 soldiers today. The Western powers should have sent at least 2,00,000 fighters and should have raised an army of 3,00,000 Afghans within the next one year to be increased to 5,00,000 to replenish the space vacated by

**What is most surprising is the fact that Pakistan has no qualms in hoodwinking its generous patron, the USA. The American assistance is used to defeat the American purpose**

the Western soldiers after 18 months.

Why does Afghanistan need such a large army? Please think of those tranquil days of Zahir Shah 37 years ago when no such thing like the Taliban or Mujahideen existed. Zahir Shah had an army consisting of almost 2,00,000 troops plus conscription. Every Afghan young man had to undergo army training. The population of Afghanistan has just doubled during the last three-and a half-decades and the country is passing through a constant civil war. Most of the Afghan households have their own weaponry and it needs slightest provocation to turn them into the Taliban or their supporters.

The American doctrine of counter insurgency stipulates a ratio of 20 to 25 soldiers for every 1000 inhabitants, which means that for the population of 29 million you need almost 7,00,000 soldiers to tackle

the jihadis. The total number of the Afghan soldiers in the army and the police as well as the foreign forces is nearly half of the above.

### Afro-Asian troops

One does appreciate the constraints under which the Western forces are deployed in Afghanistan. The Dutch Government fell on this issue recently. Several other countries, including Canada, are keen to recall their soldiers. In such a situation several Asian and African countries could be approached to send their soldiers. The cost of maintaining an Afghan soldier compared to an alliance soldier is less by 70 to 80 times. The Asian and African soldiers would have definitely cost much less than the Western soldiers. The London Conference did talk about training an Afghan National Army of 3,00,000 soldiers but if it is not done in a year or so the date of withdrawal may turn out to be a mere fantasy.

### Taliban recruits

If you are determined to raise an army of half a million soldiers in Afghanistan, you would be striking at the source of the Taliban recruitment. The unemployed youth to be lured to fight for the Taliban will be simply not available. You will be killing two birds with one stone. You will also be hitting at the source of opium smuggling, arms running and mafia organisations. With an army of half-a-million Afghan soldiers you can provide protection to almost every village and tribe of Afghanistan. The ordinary people will feel safe in cooperating with the army and provide intelligence against the Taliban.

Once the Government is able to set up an effective mechanism in every district the Taliban attacks will dwindle automatically and they will be willing to negotiate with the Government in Kabul. It is futile to negotiate without strength. The London Conference has sanctioned 500 million dollars to help Taliban to come to negotiation table. This move should not be debunked offhand. Perhaps more money would be needed to attract the unemployed and misguided youth. There is no use rejecting the effort at bringing the Taliban elements to the mainstream. Such an effort is called by some governments as total surrender to the terrorists. This is the result of extreme simplification of a complex problem. Those who reject the dialogue with the Taliban, hardly delved into the circumstances due to which young people are forced to join the terrorists. The motivating factor always is not Islam but the tribal loyalties, excesses of the foreign armies, lure of money and weapons and an age-old tradition of expelling the foreign occupier.

### Pakistani game plan

Added to all these motives, is the provocation unleashed by the Pakistan establishment. Pakistan has relentlessly worked for setting up a fifth province for itself carved out from the territories of Afghanistan. Taking advantage of the long drawn turmoil it has put out a new military doctrine of seeking a strategic depth for itself in Afghanistan. It says that it needs this depth against the possible military push by India. It is leaving no stone unturned to realize this Mughal dream. It works both ways. It cuts both India and

Afghanistan. Pakistan trains, arms and organises jihadis in the name of Islam. What is most surprising is the fact that it has no qualms in hoodwinking its generous patron, the USA. The American assistance is used to defeat the American purpose.

However since the advent of Obama, the scenario has changed a little bit. The American administration has for the first time introduced a caveat while offering 1.5 billion dollars aid every year. Pakistan has to prove that it has spent this money in fighting against the Al Qaeda. The American assistance has always been used, by and large, against India, whether it was meant to fight the Soviets or the Communists in Kabul.

It is high time that the Taliban are delinked from Pakistan and they are approached directly. The call for dialogue with them by the London Conference is not asking to concede any unreasonable demand of Taliban. In fact the 14th paragraph of the London declaration dealing with the negotiations does not even mention the Taliban by their name. It only calls for bringing those elements to mainstream who are ready to abjure violence and are willing to accept the democratic set up. Had India opposed this move, it would have not signed the London declaration. India is opposed to accommodating those Taliban who are out to impose their Islamic hegemony over Kabul, then Peshawar and ultimately Islamabad.

### India, the victim

Talibani Islam has nothing to do with the Islam of Muhammad. It is the Islam

of Osama bin Laden and that of Mullah Omar. Their Islam's worst victim is India. It did attack the US and some of the Western countries but the main brunt is borne by India. India has lost more than one hundred thousand lives during the last two decades and its Parliament, its most sacred temples, its best hotels, its railways and its aeroplanes have been targeted. India has to play a leading role in decimating this deeply entrenched structure of terror.

If the Western powers and the Afghan Government are planning to drive a wedge among the Taliban, India has to welcome this effort. In fact, *India should initiate a dialogue with the so called Taliban on its own. Who are those Taliban? Though every Pathan is not a Talib but every Talib is a Pathan. Pathans have been friends of India for centuries. They came much closer to India after the creation of Pakistan. They looked upon India as their benefactor in the wake of Pakistani atrocities.* Badshah Khan (another name for the charismatic giant Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan) and his kin were known as ardent friends of India. But during the last three decades a political distance has cropped up between the Pathans and India.

### Win back the Pathans

The Pathans have a grievance that India had been supporting the Afghan-Northern Alliance, which consisted of mostly the non-Pashtun leaders of Afghanistan. These Pathans have been used against India in Kashmir and other places by Pakistan. It is necessary to win them back. Hamid Karzai, who is a Popalzai Pathan, is keen to speak to them. India should support him whole hog to serve its own long term interests. If India sulks back, it will be a loser in the aftermath of the American withdrawal. India cannot afford to ignore the Pathans, whether the Taliban win or lose after July 2011.

Even if the Taliban take over Kabul by violence or by democratic method at a later date, India should know that their repulsion for the Punjabis of Pakistan is more acute than for the Hindus of India. Their hatred against the Punjabi domination is proverbial. They will ultimately like to make up with India to size up Pakistan. That's what they tried to do at the fag end of their rule in Kabul. The so called Taliban Ambassador met me in December 1999 thrice in New York at the UN to seek recognition and friendly relations with India. Do we know how our hijacked plane was released safely from Kandahar?

Once India tries to be close to the Pathans and starts negotiating with the so called Taliban, the Pakistan establishment will start trembling with anger. However, the diplomatic skills of India will be on test. India has to understand that it is the largest regional power of South Asia and it cannot command allegiance of its neighbours, especially Pakistan, if it does not accommodate their legitimate interests and aspirations. There could be no denial of the

fact that as far as Afghanistan is concerned Pakistan will enjoy preponderance over India due not only to common borders but shared ethnicities, religion and strategic convergence. Pakistan should be assured by India that it has no interest in fuelling sub-nationalism in South Asia. It would not support an independent Pakhtunistan or Balochistan. It is ready to work along with Pakistan to promote stability and

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democracy in Afghanistan. Let Pakistan take lead in the bilateral and local issues and India can look after the larger framework of regional cooperation and stability.

The Indian army is capable of taking responsibility for raising an Afghan National Army of half-a-million soldiers at a very low cost. What India has been doing for years on a small scale can be enlarged into one of the most challenging military exercises. Needless to say what India can accomplish in Afghanistan no other country can. If NATO coalition is ready to foot the bill, India can help them organize a peaceful exit on the appointed date.

India's current constructive role in Afghanistan has earned it unusual plaudits. India has spent more than 1.5 billion dollars and sacrificed its diplomats, soldiers and workers in Afghanistan. *India has for the first time liberated Afghanistan from the shackles of being a land-locked country. It has built the Zaranj-Delaram road near the Iranian Border which provides Afghanistan with an alternative route to Afghanistan to reach the world. Its age-old total dependency for transit on Pakistan is a matter of the past.* However, India's role in Afghanistan appears to be extremely passive and subdued. It sounds like India playing a second fiddle to the US. India seems to

lack its own strategy in Afghanistan. We have perhaps, paid no attention to the post US-exit scenario. Is it possible to continue to work in Afghanistan once the Western forces leave? Who will protect the Indian Embassy and the Indian workers? Apart from worrying about our own protection did we ever think about the state of Afghanistan in post-American phase? The Indian contribution running into one and a half billion dollars may be wiped off along with the present set up. What are we doing to strengthen the present democratic regime?

Many American friends in Washington DC recently tried to probe with me the possibility of Indian takeover after the ISAF forces leave. Yes, India has the military capability to do that but it would prove to be a dangerous trap for India. Afghanistan is far more complicated than Sri Lanka. Didn't we learn our bitter lessons there? However, it does not mean that India can have no military role in Afghanistan. In fact, India can play the most crucial military role in Afghanistan during the next 18 months. The Indian army is capable of taking responsibility for raising an Afghan National Army of half-a-million soldiers at a very low cost. However, the worst opposition to this plan will emanate from Pakistan. It is up to the US to

persuade Pakistan to remain either neutral or join Indian efforts at raising the Afghan National Army. *It should be made clear to all the parties that the Afghans have to fight for themselves. No foreign army can fight for them forever.*

The convergence of the Indian and Pakistan interests in Afghanistan is the first condition to bring about a regional solution in Afghanistan. In fact, Pakistan has become, of late, a more serious victim of terrorism than India. Why can't Pakistan and India form a joint front against terrorism and start operating from Afghanistan. The Pakistan leadership may be persuaded by the Americans to do the needful in this regard but the army and intelligence will not give in on this score. If the Americans fail in this mission, they will be paving the way for eventual takeover first of Kabul, then Peshawar and ultimately of Islamabad by the Taliban.

India can cope up with this situation on its own but we should not be oblivious of the fact that India and Pakistan both are nuclear powers. If the US withdraws from Afghanistan without making a foolproof alternative arrangement it will be paving the way for a possible nuclear disaster. The London Conference did talk of regional cooperation as a major factor to resolve the Afghan conundrum but it hardly paid any attention to Indo-Pak detente.



Construction at the Zaranj-Delaram Road



## Afghan sovereignty

The London Conference did provide 500 million dollars for the dialogue with the dissidents but it has not spelt out a clear amount to salvage the sinking ship of reconstruction in Afghanistan. The amount spent on the reconstruction compared to the military operations is nothing but like a cumin seed in the mouth of a camel. Most of the foreign assistance has been funneled into Afghanistan through NGOs. President Hamid Karzai himself told me that his government hardly controls from 4 to 20 per cent of entire foreign assistance. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams are almost autonomous. This arrangement deals a blow to the prestige of the Central Government of Afghanistan and falls prey to local aggrandisements. Similarly the International Security Assistance Force operates on its own. The Afghan Defence Ministry has no control over them. The ordinary Afghans interpret these two phenomena as the evidence of lack of sovereignty in their government. It does provide grist to the propaganda mill of the Taliban.

They call Hamid Karzai Government as the puppet of the US. Unless the Central Government of Afghanistan is endowed with real powers on military operations and foreign assistance, the effective governance would remain a far cry. The Afghans don't respect a ruler unless he is really powerful.

The power of Government in Kabul is also eroded because of the unrestricted production of opium and its smuggling. Afghanistan is the largest producer of opium in the world. It produced nine thousand tones of opium last year. The money generated by opium is more than the total budget of the Government. The opium mafia has the capacity to run a parallel government in Afghanistan. The highest government officials and even the Western Commanders are said to be hand in glove in this trade. The Taliban, their supporters and thousands of opium farmers thrive on opium production and sale. They have an international

network. There is no dearth of money to buy weapons and lure the unemployed youth for terrorism. *The opium sustains the terrorism and the terrorism sustains the opium in Afghanistan.*

The London Conference has taken an adequate note of this most dangerous phenomenon in Afghanistan. It has found that the opium farming is reduced by 22 per cent this year and instead of only six districts 20 districts have been completely freed of opium production. Unless the Government of Afghanistan controls the cultivation and trade of opium on war footing, it is impossible to hit at the financial source of the Taliban.

Hamid Karzai is one of the kindest rulers of Afghanistan. He is extremely democratic in his approach to his friends and also to the enemies. He is not autocratic as far as dealing with other institutions in concerned but this leniency has taken a serious toll of the Afghan system. Corruption has become a national disease in Afghanistan. The ministers, army officials, bureaucrats and even the judges are found to be openly involved in corruption. The London Conference has very wisely asked the government to keep the relatives of politicians away from lucrative government posts. This is not enough. If the Karzai Government wants to eliminate corruption, it has to administer exemplary punishment to the culprits. The proposed 12 thousand new entrants to bureaucracy should know in advance the fate of the corrupt officials. Karzai has to begin with the top. He should act against his own kin who have tainted his image. Even if they are not really guilty they should be removed from their posts to assuage the public opinion.

## Reconstruction

The London Conference has promised to infuse the reconstruction work with adequate resources but it is very strange that it has declared the fund of 500 million dollars for negotiating with the dissidents but said nothing about the exact amount to be extended as foreign assistance. It could have declared amounts of say,

50 billion dollars in one go. It would have had a dramatic impact on the overall situation in Afghanistan. The alliance countries have spent several times more amount than this on their military operations. Their policy on foreign assistance needs a drastic review.

The alliance countries should ensure that a solid political structure is set up in Afghanistan before they leave it by July 2011. Does the world know that there are no regular political parties in Afghanistan? It is like a roof without pillars. There remains a constant stalemate between the President and the Parliament. The popularly elected President has no way to reach the people directly. There is no bridge between the government and the citizens except the inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy.

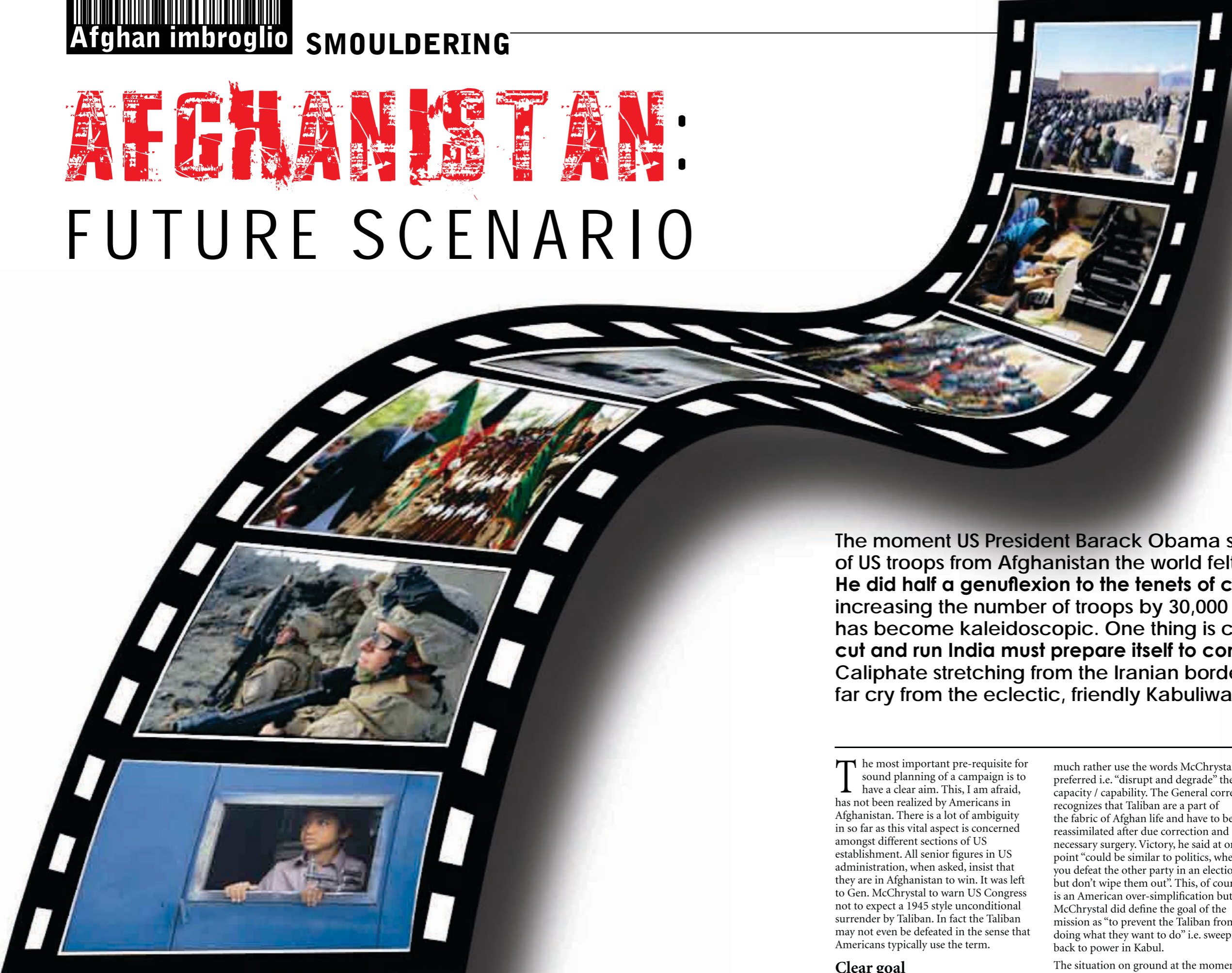
The recent reelection of President Hamid Karzai is a tribute to the Afghan democracy but it has left a wide political cleavage amongst the politicians of Afghanistan. It is like a national divide. Despite Karzai's best effort at bringing all kinds of elements to his cabinet the bitterness is persisting at the national level. It has also percolated to the district level. *A vigorous national reconciliation is the need of the hour. If the Afghans don't swim together during this difficult time, they will sink together as soon as the Western forces leave Afghanistan.* **DA**

*The writer is a renowned expert on Afghanistan. He is the only one among the top Indian experts on international affairs, who has studied at Kabul University, knows the languages of Afghanistan and has travelled extensively in that country. His PhD thesis (JNU): A Comparative Study of Afghanistan's Relations with the USA and the USSR has won international acclaim, though it was written in Hindi, which ignited uproarious debates in the Indian Parliament 45 years ago. He has published two books and more than 80 articles and research papers on Afghanistan throughout these years of turmoil. He is the former Editor of PTI-Bhasha and Nav Bharat Times. He has been a Senior Fellow at Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) from 1981 to 83.*

# AFGHANISTAN: FUTURE SCENARIO



Lt. Gen. (Retd.)  
R.K. Sawhney



The moment US President Barack Obama set a date for withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan the world felt that he had lost the plot. He did half a genuflexion to the tenets of counter-insurgency by increasing the number of troops by 30,000 but the larger picture has become kaleidoscopic. One thing is clear, if the US and its allies cut and run India must prepare itself to confront a cut-throat Wahabi Caliphate stretching from the Iranian border to Pakistan's Punjab – a far cry from the eclectic, friendly Kabuliwalas of yore.

The most important pre-requisite for sound planning of a campaign is to have a clear aim. This, I am afraid, has not been realized by Americans in Afghanistan. There is a lot of ambiguity in so far as this vital aspect is concerned amongst different sections of US establishment. All senior figures in US administration, when asked, insist that they are in Afghanistan to win. It was left to Gen. McChrystal to warn US Congress not to expect a 1945 style unconditional surrender by Taliban. In fact the Taliban may not even be defeated in the sense that Americans typically use the term.

#### Clear goal

We in India with our experience in counter-insurgency operations would

much rather use the words McChrystal preferred i.e. "disrupt and degrade" their capacity / capability. The General correctly recognizes that Taliban are a part of the fabric of Afghan life and have to be re-assimilated after due correction and necessary surgery. Victory, he said at one point "could be similar to politics, where you defeat the other party in an election, but don't wipe them out". This, of course, is an American over-simplification but McChrystal did define the goal of the mission as "to prevent the Taliban from doing what they want to do" i.e. sweeping back to power in Kabul.

The situation on ground at the moment is that insurgents are actually winning. The urgency of sending reinforcements

is to stop them from over-running any population centres, to halt their momentum and ultimately fight them to standstill. Indian experience indicates that it is the most crucial phase of counter insurgency operation. If successfully conducted, this would give space for development of Afghan governance and security forces as well as enhance prospects of some sort of political solution. There must also be emphasis on nation-building, for which there appears to be a lack of enthusiasm from President Obama downwards and requires a serious introspection by the American establishment. It is nation-building which would increase the stakes of an ordinary Afghan in supporting the government against insurgents.



**US should have no doubts that Pakistani government and military are not at all serious about wrapping up Quetta Shura and other Afghan Taliban. It realizes the limits of US policy options in Pakistan and skillfully exploits them by persisting with its policy of running with hares and hunting with hounds. Pakistan has embedded interests in Afghanistan and would not like to see the Taliban vanquished unless their (Pakistan's) interests are protected**

## Corner Taliban

Right now the Taliban have no interest in seeking compromise because they believe they can regain control of Afghanistan on battlefield. Only if they are fought to a standstill and if Taliban commanders see more to gain and less to lose in some form of power sharing, will they be prepared to settle for less than what they lost when US invaded Afghanistan in 2001. Getting to that point is an uncertain bet and will involve much tough fighting by US forces, along with their allies duly supported by nascent Afghan National Army.

When talking about allies, role of Pakistan is another very important factor. If US mission in Afghanistan is to succeed, Pakistan would have to be forced or persuaded to sever ties with Afghan Taliban or else press key Taliban commanders into peace talk with Kabul. As much as Pakistan

would like to see a different government with more influence in Kabul, its Generals have to recognize that simply restoring Taliban back to power in Afghanistan would unleash another round of civil war in Afghanistan – Pashtuns versus everyone else – that would do little to stabilize Pakistan's domestic turmoil.

## Pak duplicity

Should the US be serious about completing its mission, it has no option but to aim at forcing Pakistani Army to stop pursuing their twin track policy of confronting Pashtun tribes that are allied with Pakistani Taliban while giving sanctuaries and encouraging Afghan Taliban who are fighting NATO forces across the Durand Line. Any squeamishness in this regard will only prolong this war. I shall discuss this in detail subsequently.

US experts acknowledge that bad or non-existent governance, extreme poverty and unchecked proselytizing and intimidation by Islamic extremists create the conditions under which Taliban / Al-Qaeda can attract, recruit and train fighters as well as prepare attacks against targets determined by them. But there is little that can be done, some of such experts argue, other than mounting counter-insurgency operations aimed at killing the ring leaders. Attacking the root of the problem, they insist, is a fool's errand. The US has neither the methods nor means to turn Afghanistan into a stable state; President Obama at times seems infected with this attitude. Though he is clearly serious about fighting what he calls "the war against Al-Qaeda / Taliban" and has ordered a major expansion of both military and civil operations in Afghanistan, yet in the same speech, he had rejected "goals that are beyond what can

be achieved at a reasonable cost". He also said that he intended to shift the balance between investments in national security and domestic economy. "We cannot simply afford to ignore the price of these wars" he said, "the nation that I am most interested in building is our own"

## Force-multiplier

The notion that US and its allies or the regional / international communities should not aim at concerted effort to build governance and economic development in a country like Afghanistan is dangerously misguided. It ignores the long and mostly successful US history of combating security threats with investments in development and good governance. The Marshall plan after World War II rebuilt European countries from shambles. Even now Obama government is committed to spending \$ 6.7 billion this year alone to combat AIDS abroad – mostly in countries where extremism of the Taliban / Al-Qaeda variety is absent and which are in much better shape than Afghanistan, Yemen or Somalia.

Expenditure and effort spent on nation

building must in my view, be deemed as force-multiplier to counter insurgency operations. If diligently planned and executed in conjunction with Afghan government, it would yield substantial results.

## Pak proxies

Pakistani military is unwilling to take effective action against the Haqqani network, the Quetta Shura Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin for variety of reasons including:

- Hedging against an expected US withdrawal from or a failure in Afghanistan.
- Fear of a US success in Afghanistan that empowers India in Afghanistan.
- Decades-old ties between elements in Pakistani military and Intelligence agencies and these groups.
- The desire to maintain valuable proxies for use in Afghanistan and India.

Significant evidence supports above wisdom, which no doubt explains much of Islamabad's consistent refusal to acknowledge that most of these Afghan-

like those of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Haqqani. Pakistani Army after much cajoling, had launched major operations against TTP in South Waziristan, which the US is forcing them to extend to north Waziristan and other contiguous areas to deny Afghan Taliban free cross border movement and support from TTP and even Pakistani Intelligence agencies. Pakistani military, however, is chary of initiating a process the escalation of which would be difficult to control by them and which could rapidly spread into Punjabi heartland, as is already happening.

US should have no doubts that Pakistani government and military are not at all serious about wrapping up Quetta Shura and other Afghan Taliban. It realizes the limits of US policy options in Pakistan and skillfully exploits them by persisting with its policy of running with hares and hunting with hounds. Pakistan has embedded interests in Afghanistan and would not like to see the Taliban vanquished unless their (Pakistan's) interests are protected.

Thus as the war continues, Pakistan will

Minister, he has the necessary insight into the government's working and though affiliated with Northern Alliance (he was a close aid of Commander Massud) he has gradually developed a pan-Afghan following after the recent Presidential election which he lost quite narrowly (and unfairly according to him).

He makes no bones about his intentions to fight next Presidential elections which President Karzai will not be eligible to contest as per the Afghan Constitution. His mixed parentage (mother Tajik and father Pashtun) should help. He would like the Parliament to be more assertive. Yonus Qanooni, speaker of the lower house endorses this view and feels that President Karzai and his cabinet took the parliament for granted and never allowed it to carry out its legitimate duty.

Presidential election in 2009 was probably the trigger which made the members of parliament realize their role / importance at the tail end of their tenure or perhaps they wanted to impress their constituents for the forthcoming next election; they turned down 17 out of President Karzai's 24 ministerial nominees including an



focused groups have sanctuaries within Pakistan's borders, much less conduct or support meaningful operations against them in Pakistan.

## Siege mentality

Situation in Pakistan is in a sense becoming worse than Afghanistan. On the one hand Afghan Taliban retain their sanctuaries in FATA and on the other, after a period of setback following death of Baitullah Mehsud in a drone attack, TTP has regrouped and launched a major offensive against the Pakistani State. This is indicated by a spate of attacks in the heartland, particularly the GHQ at Rawalpindi, police HQ and training establishments in Punjab. This is amidst growing signs of developing coalition between TTP and Punjab based Deobandi group espousing Wahabi ideology like JeM, LeT, LeJ, etc.

TTP remains a cohesive force despite setbacks in Swat and has close coordination with Afghan Taliban and other groups

make sure that Afghan Taliban or some other group remains influential in Afghanistan to protect its interests. Prospects of the defeat of Afghan Taliban would possibly result in a double whammy in Pakistan's perception – it may revive the old Afghanistan-Pakistan dispute over creation of Pashtunistan as well as increase Indian influence on its western border. I feel, therefore, Pakistan would continue to shape an Afghan policy that has exclusion of Indian leverage to its west and domination of Afghanistan as its main planks, irrespective of the damage it can cause to itself as well as the region. It is less of a policy and more of a self-destructive obsession.

## Afghan reforms

US and Western media have ignored one of the important fallouts of the controversial Presidential election which is emergence of Mr. Abdullah Abdullah as a credible opposition leader who has shown capacity as well as maturity. He intends now to function full time in his new self-acquired capacity and act as a watchdog of Afghan public interest. A former Foreign

influential minister (and old so-called warlord) Ismail Khan. Most of the rejects were allied to civil-war-era militia leaders or political parties. The new nominees are a definite improvement over the last lot and include a number of highly educated individuals and three women. This list has also been only partially approved by the parliament which gives indication of the future trend.

Next parliament elections are due in June 2010. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) has decreed that parliamentary elections must go ahead on 22 May. However, a credible election would require overhaul of a rotten system and notably IEC which proved far from independent. This would create another painful political dilemma when parliament's span expires in June 2010. Should Afghanistan just live without a parliament or should its term be extended? An extension is more likely.

## Payola culture

Afghans want to see a change in governance. Corruption is all pervasive;



almost all officials and ministers are involved. As President Karzai begins his new term, this culture of graft is blamed for driving a wedge between Afghans and their government – even driving some towards Taliban. Some of the shifting public support to Taliban is due to the fact that they, unlike the central government, seem to take such widespread corruption seriously. In the areas under their domination, Taliban have set up own anti-corruption committees which allow Afghans to complain about any injustice, including those inflicted by the Taliban. Such type of committees would be a good idea for the government to follow. Government must also learn from example set by Taliban who run their own courts which are known for quick justice without need to pay bribes.

## New awareness

With an ambitious opposition leader out to make his mark, an assertive parliament which had been taken too long for granted, a chastened President wanting to prove himself and an impatient US and international community wanting to see improvement in governance, there is a possibility that quite a few national issues would come up for consideration in the near future. These include how electoral fraud might be prevented in future; whether provincial governors should be elected rather than appointed at presidential whim; how ethnic balance can be assured as country's army and police forces grow; whether political parties should be allowed to function and field their candidates in next elections; whether

2004 constitution should be revised to strengthen parliament; how drug dealing officials should be brought to account; and how Taliban foot soldiers and leaders can be encouraged to forswear violent revolution for constitutional politics.

## Afghan conference

The international meet on Afghanistan on 28 January 2010 in London was an important milestone on the road to stability of this region. The international community agreed to increase the Afghan Army and Police Force to 171,000 and 134,000 respectively by the end of 2011, taking total security force numbers to over 300,000. The international force level will also be increased by 39,000 taking the number to 135,000. The civil bureaucracy will receive support from international community to support governance and economic development with special emphasis on national peace and reintegration programme. One hopes for the sake of Afghanistan that the pledges of this conference will be fulfilled and attempts will be made to guard interest of Afghanistan rather than other regional or international players.

## Maligning India

An Afghan leader (a Pashtun incidentally) whom I met in December '09, told me that legitimate Pakistani interests should not mean converting Afghanistan once again into a vassal State of their eastern neighbour. One hears in quite a few forums about India indulging in a "Great Game" in so far as Afghanistan is concerned. It is a ridiculous analogy to say the least. The

great game in the nineteenth century was at best a frivolous imperial adventure in the colonial era. India has no pretensions to be anything other than a developing country albeit with a legitimate claim to be a regional player having long-term strategic goals to encourage a stable, democratic and self-sustaining Afghanistan which is not bullied or coerced to come under the sway of radical Islam or a foreign influence inimical to our regional and security concerns.

It would be illogical for a mature nation like India to woo Afghanistan just to spite Pakistan or come in the way of their legitimate security / commercial concerns. Pakistan, however, must spell out its interests in Afghanistan rather than assuming a proprietorial attitude towards that country. A neutral Afghanistan, acting as a bridge between Central Asia and south-east Asia should meet the national interests of Pakistan but does not satisfy their military.

For Pakistani military, the increase in New Delhi's economic power, its improved relations with the US in recent years only deepen their fears about marginalization in this area and accordingly strengthen its conviction to hold onto the Taliban and similar groups for geo-strategic reasons. Pakistan would be well advised to resort to positive measures with Afghan population rather than ganging up with Taliban in the guise of supporting Pashtun cause.

## India endorsed

In a recent Gallup poll, when asked about the roles the Afghans thought that various groups or countries were playing in resolving the situation in Afghanistan,

59 per cent favoured India's role. UN and NATO were mentioned by 57 per cent and 51 per cent respectively. In another public opinion survey conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI), India topped the list of the countries seen as having "good relations with Afghanistan" – with 24 per cent of respondents naming India, followed by Iran (17 per cent), Tajikistan (12 per cent) and US (10 per cent). Pakistan, interestingly, was mentioned by only 5 per cent Afghans covered in the IRI survey. New Delhi is treating above polls and surveys as a "ready reckoner of Afghan goodwill", while also maintaining that this was "no reflection" on quantum of funding committed to that country. While India maybe the largest regional donor to Afghanistan, it is sixth largest donor in the world.

## Pak blackmail

On the contrary, instead of making sincere efforts to improve their standing in Afghanistan (which they can), Pakistan attempts to blackmail US to assuage their fears, intervene in the resolution of Kashmir dispute and offer Islamabad a grand bargain that would make it more cooperative in conducting counter-insurgency operations, especially against the Afghan Taliban. This is an inordinately circuitous approach to neutralize Afghan Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan – and one that in any case, is bound to fail. Such tactics instigated by Pakistani military, have less to do with either Afghanistan or India and more to cater to its need to justify its continued and self-interested lock on power within Pakistan.

## Future scenario

In the end let us see what is likely to happen in next 12 months. First, given the challenge of deploying and sustaining troops in an incredibly difficult and underdeveloped region, the troop building will probably take most of the year to complete. Initially, as the new units pass out into areas where no coalition forces have operated before – especially in the large Pashtun provinces in south and east – the stark prediction of senior US military commanders will no doubt be fulfilled; US casualty will spike until soldiers and their leaders become accustomed to new terrain and enemy that has operated at will there.

But as the forces adopt, they will fight with increased effectiveness and more and more insurgents will choose not to give battle, deciding instead to move to either their sanctuaries in Pakistan or to new havens they are able to identify. They may also choose to simply melt away into the masses of their Pashtun countrymen. Contacts with enemy are likely to decline which means less casualty to US / NATO soldiers. Casualty to Afghan civilians would also decrease. Terrorist attacks in US / NATO controlled areas will continue to occur. Pakistan military would persist in offering excuses rather than cooperate or coordinate operations against Afghan Taliban while confining their operations against TTP.

The Afghan National Army and police will grow but not at the pace desired by US. Afghans will be in lead in military operations in several less violent provinces in north and west. At national level, security operations will give

breathing room for Karzai government to attempt reforms. There would be a little improvement in governance and minimal improvement in fighting corruption. There would also be some progress in functioning of local government, small businesses and farming. There would, however, be quite a few questions requiring to be tackled. For example:

- Would it be necessary to "defeat" the Taliban in order to break their momentum or might containing the spread of their influence be enough?
- How far does the reach of Afghan government need to extend before it can be declared ready to take responsibility for Afghanistan's future?
- What provinces or regions might be controlled or governed, and where might it be acceptable to establish a looser form of administration?
- How can Pakistan be induced to meaningfully contribute towards success of the Afghan operation? **DA**

*The writer retired as the Deputy Chief of the Army Staff. He is a post graduate in Defence and Security Planning from the Royal College of Defence Studies, London. He has commanded an Infantry Battalion, Division and Corps during his military career and subsequently served as the Director General of Military Intelligence. He is presently a Distinguished Fellow of Vivekananda International Foundation, a 'think tank' in New Delhi, comprising retired senior officers of Armed Forces, diplomats, intelligence officers and civil servants.*



## WAPCOS Presence in Afghanistan

### Introduction

Origin of WAPCOS dates back to 1968, when Dr. K. L. Rao, the then Hon'ble Minister of Irrigation and Power, Govt. of India visited Afghanistan. During the visit, recognising the expertise and technical knowledge built-up in India in the fields of Irrigation and Power, Govt. of Afghanistan requested for help of Govt. of India in planning and implementation of small hydro-power projects. This resulted in the need for an independent consultancy organisation, which could pool and share the expertise and technical know-how, available to specialised organisations of Govt. of India, with other developing countries.

Incorporated on June 26, 1969 under the Companies Act 1956, WAPCOS Limited a "MINI RATNA" Public Sector Enterprise under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Water Resources, the company provides consultancy services in all facets of Water Resources, Power and Infrastructure Sectors in India and Abroad. The quality management systems of WAPCOS comply with the Quality Assurance requirements of **ISO 9001:2000** for consultancy services in Water Resources, Power and Infrastructure Development Projects, as certified by Indian Register Quality Systems.

### Vision

Company's Vision is

*"To be a Premier Consultancy Organisation recognised as a Brand in Water, Power and Infrastructure Development for Total Project Solutions in India and Abroad"*.

### Fields of Specialisation

Main fields of specialisation of the company cover Irrigation and Drainage, Flood Control and Land Reclamation, River Management,

Dams, Reservoir Engineering and Barrages, Integrated Agriculture Development, Watershed Management, Hydropower and Thermal Power Generation, Power Transmission and Distribution, Rural Electrification, Ground Water Exploration, Minor Irrigation, Water Supply and Sanitation (Rural and Urban), Environmental Engineering including Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Audit, Ports and Harbours and Inland Waterways, Rain Water Harvesting; Survey & Investigations, Human Resource Management, System Studies and Information Technology. WAPCOS has also been venturing into newer fields such as Software Development, City Development Plans, Financial Management System, Technical Education, Quality Control and Construction Supervision, Roads & Bridges. The Company has recently amended its Articles of Association to provide concept to commissioning services for developmental projects in India and Abroad.

### Spectrum of Services

WAPCOS' spectrum of services covers a wide range of activities e.g. pre-feasibility studies, feasibility studies, simulation studies, diagnostic studies, socio-economic studies, master plans and regional development plans, field investigations, detailed engineering including designs, detailed specifications, tendering process, contract and construction management, commissioning and testing, operation & maintenance, quality assurance & management, software development and human resource development.

### Registration with International Organisations

WAPCOS is registered with various international funding agencies for participating in the funded projects like World

Bank/International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Food and Agriculture Organisation, International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Development Program, World Health Organisation, West African Development Bank, Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund, Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) etc.

### Operations Abroad

Apart from India, WAPCOS has successfully completed/on-going consultancy assignments abroad in 40 countries and is currently engaged in providing consultancy services in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan and Taiwan.



Rock Drilling at The Stung Tasal Dam Site, Cambodia



Construction of 115 KV Transmission Line, Laos PDR



Nam Song Hydro Power Project, Laos PDR



Stung Treng-Kartie 230kV Transmission Line Project, Cambodia



Main Access Tunnel - under construction Punatsangchu-I.H.E. Project, Bhutan



WAPCOS experts visit at the Thermal Project site (2x250 MW) at Benue, Nigeria

### Strategic Importance of WAPCOS

WAPCOS as a techno-commercial organisation under the aegis of Ministry of Water Resources utilises the talent and expertise developed in the various organisations of Govt. of India and State Govts. WAPCOS is responsible for providing quality time bound services to the clients, which is the very essence of WAPCOS operations. WAPCOS drives its strength from its human resources, which form the backbone of the organisation. The consultancy services are carried out in 3 main Centres i.e. Water Resources, Power and Infrastructure. WAPCOS has the in-built capability to provide a multidisciplinary project team comprising its core of professionals and also working specialists from various Govt. of India Organisations viz. Central Water Commission (CWC), Central Electricity Authority (CEA), Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO), Central Water and Power Research Station (CWPRS), Central Soil and Material Research Station (CSMRS) etc. and other State and Public Works Departments.

### Recognition

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India conferred WAPCOS "SCOPE Award for Excellence and Outstanding Contribution to the Public Sector Management-Smaller Public Enterprises" for the year 2007-08 and "MoU Excellence Award in the Consultancy Sector" for the year 2007-08. WAPCOS has received "EEPC Award for Export Excellence (Northern Region) for Star Performer as Medium Enterprise in Engineering Services", "EEPC All India Export Award 2005-2006: Engineering Services: Large Enterprises" and "EEPC (Northern Region) Award" under the category of "Project Export/Consultancy Services-Large Enterprises in 2004-2005".



WAPCOS Presence in Afghanistan

WAPCOS relationship with Afghanistan started since its inception and the friendship continues till date. The company has taken up several important projects in Afghanistan under LoC of Govt. of India through Ministry of External Affairs. Some of them are: -

- Salma Dam Project (3 X 14 MW) in Herat Province

- Rehabilitation of Quargah Reservoir Dam Project and Amir Ghazi Dam Project
- Design, Engineering, Supply and Supervision of erection, testing and commissioning of 110kV & 20 kV transmission line and substation equipment in Faryab Province.



While Salma Dam Project is continuing, other three have been successfully completed and handed over to the Afghanistan Govt. Salma Dam Project is a hydropower project on turnkey basis primarily meant for generating electricity to cater to nearby areas. It's a rockfill dam with claycore of 107.5m height and will have a surface power house. It will also irrigate an area of 75000 ha through irrigation sluice. All the projects are friendship gesture by Govt. of India to Govt. of Afghanistan and WAPCOS is contributing towards goodwill gesture.

- Drilling, construction, erection, testing and commissioning of 32 Nos. tube wells in Herat Province.



Commissioning of Tube wells at Herat Province



Appreciation-cum-Completion Certificate issued by Governor of Herat



# failing campaign?



Brig. (Retd.) Rahul Bhonsle

If Mullah Omar, the one-eyed Amir of the Afghan Shura operating out of a Pakistan Army Inter-Services Intelligence safe haven in Quetta, plays all the aces he is being dealt by the back-peddling Western Alliance with finesse, he can trigger a Saigon-style stampede with US troops hanging on by their fingernails to helicopters. India was not invited to the Istanbul conclave and was isolated at the London meeting when it said that there is no such thing as a "good Taliban". India must prepare its own defences against the emerging Wahabi Caliphate next door.



The winter of 2001 was one of great triumph for American strategy, after the tragedy of 9/11, later typified as the “American Way of War” which led to a grand military sweep of Afghanistan. A mix of air power, local forces of the Northern Alliance and intelligence operatives successfully drove the Taliban into tribal areas astride the Durand Line with a hunt in Tora Bora providing the only operational stimulation. This pattern of “victory” was followed in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, another successful experiment of the American way, articulated by Max Boot as “speed, manoeuvre, flexibility, and surprise,” through use of “precision firepower, special forces, and psychological operations.” The adrenalin of fighting war by remote control was very powerful, avoiding casualties to own troops yet achieving strategic goals was a formula for success which seemed to have worked well for the Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan burying the ghosts of Vietnam.

## Stretched too thin

Human conflict is however a great leveller and within a few years the Americans were to realize that there are no easy options in a counter-insurgency campaign substituting boots on the ground particularly in Afghanistan. Seeking support of allies was a natural corollary and NATO took command of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) which was established after an agreement in the Bonn Conference in 2001 “to assist the Afghan government in establishment of a secure and stable environment.”

The Alliance gradually expanded its mission from Kabul and is stretched today across the whole of Afghanistan. As on 1 February 2010, the Force has 43 troop-contributing nations some as low as 2 while the United States remains the main pillar with over 47,000 troops in a total force of 85,795 spreading over 650,000 sq.km with 26 Provincial Reconstruction Teams.[1] These are supported by an almost equal number of Afghan National Army and Police indicating the high level of deterioration in the security situation in the country. Apparently the Force strategy seems to have

failed to achieve the desired goals of peace and stability in Afghanistan. A review of the same therefore would be in order.[2]

## The Bush years

The ISAF’s initial strategy in Afghanistan was dictated by its mandate limited to providing security in and around Kabul which was extended eventually from the north of the country to the west and finally to the south and east by the end of 2006. NATO’s strategy in Afghanistan was of a comprehensive approach with “an integrated civilian-military character”.

The aim was to include “institution-building, development, governance, judiciary and police,” in the overall matrix of stabilizing the country. This is a classic counter-militancy approach to bring order to failed and ungoverned States across the world. The key to implementation of the comprehensive strategy is resources, particularly security, as it precedes governance and development. The spread had to be even from the urban centres to rural areas with people as the focus of the counter-militancy effort. Given the right amount of resources it would have delivered effective results in Afghanistan.

## Cultural disconnect

In the event of paucity of troops the comprehensive approach failed to deliver in terms of security. Thus the mission remained vastly deficient of forces which could facilitate extension of roads, healthcare, justice and order in the hinterland. There was also a major capability and cultural disconnect. Given the problems of numbers the Alliance troops, coming from the urban milieu of Europe and America, were restricted to cities and towns and engaged the Taliban in the countryside by air and helicopter attacks with sporadic patrolling operations. There was also much flak for the large number of civilian casualties from air strikes literally losing “hearts and minds” in the country. There was thus a problem of adjustment to the environment from Europe to Asia and particularly the rugged panorama of Afghanistan.

Moreover there is no evidence to show that the Alliance had studied and understood the nuances of 4th Generation warfare in Afghanistan with societal connectivity. The Taliban influence in the initial years was primarily in the Pashtun belt in the south and the east. [See Green belt in Map 1]. The Alliance on the other hand followed a strategy of first extending their operations in the north and west and then went south. Ironically where they had control in rural areas as in Musa Qala in Helmand, they chose to make peace with the Taliban.

## Handicaps

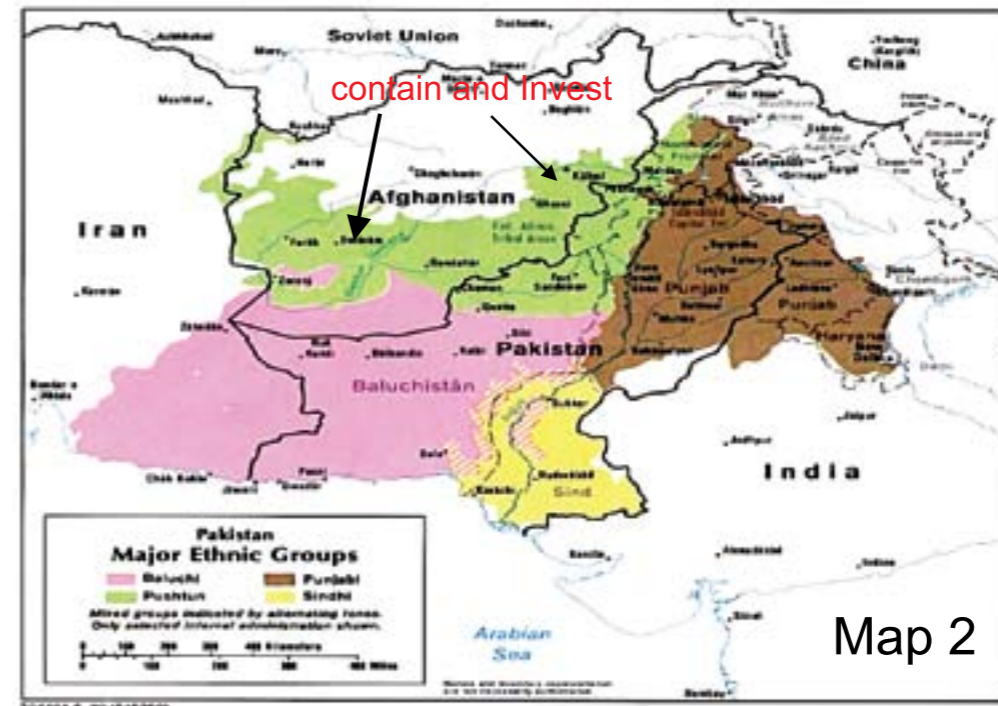
NATO forces were also hampered by the tenure of their troops which were as low as six months of some countries, time just enough for an individual to adjust to the new environment with a difference in the people, language and culture. Thus the deficiency in troops was further exacerbated by their short term time commitment in the country.

The importance of joint operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan was also ignored. An examination of the Afghan ethnic spread would reveal that Taliban influence is spread in the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan as well as Pakistan. While Pakistan had been sporadically undertaking operations in the tribal area east of the Durand Line interspersed with peace deals with the local Taliban leadership, in Afghanistan the Provincial Reconstruction Teams had very limited impact in rural areas away from their shadow. In the initial years the Afghan National Army and Police under raising could not provide the desired degree of support, thus there was always a paucity of numbers. The training of this force was also divided between different nations thus resulting in only a disjointed Afghan National Army emerging.

## Musharraf’s guile

What was required was a strategy of containment of Taliban influence in the Pashtun areas and spreading limited forces capable of undertaking combat operations in conjunction with local forces including tribal militias to connect with the people. [See Map 2]. Concomitantly taking Pakistan in the operational grid was also essential with a firm line against then President Musharraf’s classic dual policy of hunting with NATO while supping with the Taliban. A strategy of containment, denial of support from Pakistan and spreading the influence to Pashtun areas while consolidating in the north and the west would have paid better dividends even with limited number of troops.

It would therefore be seen that NATO failed to seize the initiative in all these years after having evicted the Taliban and the Al Qaeda in 2001. By 2006 it was Taliban revived in the Pashtun belts of Af-Pak which was calling the shots. The overall spread of influence of the Taliban continued with the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS) or former Senlis Council showing increase



Map 2

in Taliban activity in 97 per cent of the country in 2009 from 72 per cent the previous year.

NATO failed to implement the comprehensive strategy, primarily it appears because the nuances of the same in the Afghan context, the political, societal, military and economic facets were never understood and thus fell between two stools, counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism.

## Obama shift

With a change of Presidency from the neoconservative duo of George W Bush and aggressive Dick Cheney to a democrat Barack Obama in the United States there was a shift of focus from Iraq to Afghanistan, categorized as a war of necessity. President Barack Obama’s Afghanistan-Pakistan policy revealed in March 2009, focused on three issues – closely linking Afghanistan and Pakistan into a single continuum, creation of a group of interested regional players which included – “Contact Group for Afghanistan and Pakistan that brings together all who

should have a stake in the security of the region - our NATO allies and other partners, but also the Central Asian States, the Gulf nations and Iran; Russia, India and China” and inducting, “agricultural specialists and educators, engineers and lawyers.” This was largely a repackaged Bush policy, though the repackaging included more vigorous intervention by armed drones in Pakistan and enhancing accountability of the Pakistani leadership to deliver.

With a series of terrorist attacks rocking Pakistan after the June 2007 Lal Masjid episode in Islamabad there was greater resolve in Islamabad to fight the Pakistani Taliban even while sheltering the Afghan Shura and the Al Qaeda, a fact highlighted by no less a person than US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently on a visit to Islamabad. NATO forces thus benefited by conduct of operations by the Pakistan Army in Swat, south Waziristan and now extending to other tribal areas since May 2009.

Thus the key gains post Obama’s March policy were Pakistan having joined the counter Taliban battle and actively

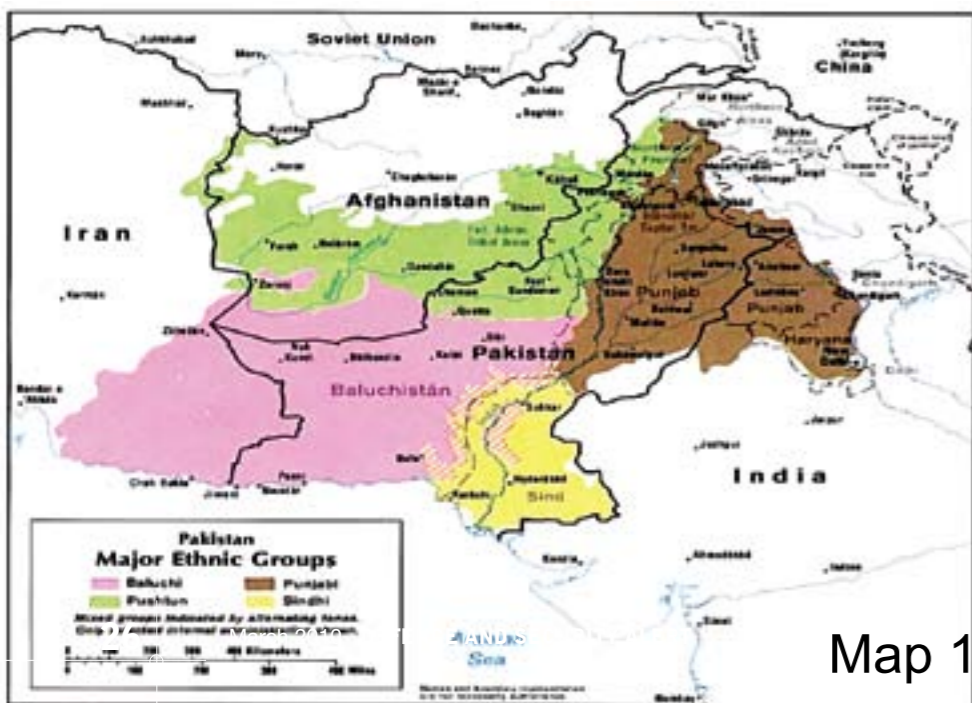
ISAF’s strategy seems to have failed to achieve the desired goals of peace and stability in Afghanistan. A review of the same therefore would be in order

countering terrorism in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) areas. Resourcing and prioritizing civilian assistance in Afghanistan and expanding the Afghan National Security Forces, Army and Police.

## Collateral damage

Concomitantly there was a change in command in Afghanistan. General Stanley McChrystal a Special Forces officer with extensive experience in counter-terrorism and insurgency took over command of the International Security Assistance Force. He had the right ideas to focus on securing the people. “Additional resources are required, but focusing on force or resource requirements misses the point entirely. The key take away from this assessment is the urgent need for a significant change to our strategy and the way that we think and operate,” the general remarked.

Thus there was a change in the rules of engagement. Air strikes were to be called only after multiple checks and confirmations. The difficulties in immediate implementation were evident when in one instance over 70 civilians were killed in Afghanistan’s northern Kunduz province on 4 September in an air raid by US F-15E Strike Eagle jet which dropped two 500-pound (225-kilogram) bombs on two tankers after they were reportedly seized by the Taliban. The German contingent on the ground had possibly paid little heed to McChrystal’s instructions.



Map 1





Deployment of (ANA)

## Taliban resurgence

The Taliban meanwhile had established themselves in the rural areas and were able to launch attacks in urban townships as well as infrastructure mainly roads, schools and government buildings targeted by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and bombs. As per UN Secretary General's report to the Security Council on Afghanistan in September 2009, there were an average of 898 incidents in the first seven months, compared to 677 during the same time in 2008. Incidents involving IEDs had risen dramatically, to an average of more than eight per day, 60 per cent higher than the average during the first seven months of 2008. Complex attacks averaged one per month compared to one per quarter in 2008.

In the majority of these attacks, security forces responded professionally and quickly, effectively containing and limiting the impact. However the increase in violence by approximately 30 per cent was alarming and also increased pressure for a pull back from Afghanistan back home in Europe and the United States.

## Obama's new strategy

Given the reality of domestic politics in NATO countries President Obama announced a policy review which extended for almost five months from July to November 2009. Announcing his fresh Af-Pak policy at West Point on 1 December, he noted that, the key goals were, "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future." The President's three pillar strategy was based on beefing up security through induction of additional troops, supporting the Afghanistan government to function more effectively and a strategic partnership with Pakistan based on his belief that the issues are interlinked. Most significantly a fourth pillar that was identified in March

of taking regional stakeholders on board was abandoned. Obviously this would have been based on some concerted pressure from the Pakistani military brass, which sees the red herring of "India" in every regional move in Afghanistan.

## Hands tied

Following up the policy on the ground, General McChrystal indicated a preference for people-centric operations, with focus on counter-insurgency. The US had been facing the dilemma in applying the two paradigms of counter-militancy vis-a-vis counter-terrorism. The former requires a much more rigorous approach with commitment of boots on the ground that are able to win over the hearts and minds of the people. This is a difficult operation given that there is always some resistance to outsiders not just in Afghanistan but also in other counter-insurgency areas and troops have to culturally adjust to the environment. Given time General McChrystal had a fair chance of success in Afghanistan, however with the President announcing the deadline of 18 months, there is now a serious doubt.

What is also of concern is handing over security management to Afghan forces starting in July 2011 which gives NATO forces just about 18 months to establish order in some provinces, hand over to the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Police and then commence a pull out. This involves creating an Army of another 100,000 soldiers within a period of one and a half years. How this programme will pan out remains to be seen.

The Taliban have also been given a time line till when they can hope to survive and restart the process of returning to Kabul. It would have perhaps been *déjà vu* of the early 1990's for Mullah Omar when with the help of Pakistani intelligence and the army, he wrested power in Kabul in 1996.

## London Conference fiasco

If there was some pretence of ensuring

stability in Afghanistan before a pullout this was abandoned in the London "International" Conference on Afghanistan on 28 January. The Conference adopted the strategy of security, good governance and development with the aim of creating necessary conditions to begin transferring of responsibility for security from international forces to Afghan forces and Afghan people. This was to be achieved with Afghanistan National Security Forces taking lead and conducting majority of operations within three years and take responsibility for physical security within five years.

The Conference also announced a controversial National Peace and Reintegration Programme, initiated through a Grand Peace Jirga to bring Taliban leaders and rebels willing to join the government on board. For this a Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund to finance the Afghan-led Peace and Reintegration Programme was to be established leading some skeptics to coin the term, "\$10 Taliban".

## Dollar trap

Peace and reconciliation is a good strategy when a militant force is defeated and is on the retreat, but will be difficult to implement when there are no signs of the Taliban having lost their capability to launch attacks at will. Under the circumstances it would be an abject surrender by the International Security Assistance Force. What is even more relevant is collection of funds for buying out the Taliban. Such a policy is likely to discredit the peace parleys and reconciliation. No less a person than former US Ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad has been critical of this policy.

Also experience of reconciliation and peace deals in the Af-Pak region particularly with the Pakistani Taliban of north and south Waziristan show that these have simply ended up with the Taliban getting respite from fighting to recoup and resume their ideological as well as armed struggle with greater vigour. Therefore the reintegration plan may be used by the Taliban to see exit of US-led forces before they reestablish the so-called Islamic Caliphate in the country. Thus a scenario of the Taliban using this opportunity to see tapering down of NATO presence in Afghanistan to restart their campaign of violence would have to be guarded against. This is the "dollar" trap that Western governments may well fall for.

## Final review

While taking up the mission of establishing peace and stability in Afghanistan, a country wracked by violence for the past three decades, NATO was severely challenged by the task of operating in an alien terrain, population and cultural environment adapting from the urban developed landscape of Europe and US to the rural heartland of Afghanistan. Adopting the comprehensive approach the coalition started well but failed to implement the secure-hold-stabilize-govern-develop paradigm required for its

successful implementation primarily due to lack of understanding of basic tenets of counter-insurgency as well as lack of resources with attention divided between a bloodier operation in Iraq and Afghanistan. Integrating Pakistan in the strategy was not addressed with the desired degree of vigour. Thus ISAF strategy remained in a flux lacking clear direction from 2001 onwards.

Moreover announcing a time line for withdrawal before stabilizing the country may also be disastrous, for 18 months to July 2011 are grossly inadequate to bring a largely rural insurgency under control by forces based in semi-urban centres in Afghanistan.

The London Conference has added to the tragedy of strategic errors. The commitment of the government and the

despite many skeptics, however the time has to be measured in decades and not in months and years.

## Graveyard of empires

Some Western analysts have brought out that their military culture obsessed with quick, cheap and decisive results is easily frustrated when faced with counter-insurgency as seen in Vietnam and Iraq.



There was only perfunctory emphasis on developing Afghan capabilities and realizing potential of the Afghan security forces that have borne the brunt of fighting. In 2009 alone as per Pajhwok News a Kabul based news website 562 Afghan National Army soldiers were killed in 3,000 security-related incidents. Afghan policemen have also borne the brunt of attacks over the years with almost 3 policemen killed every day at an average of over 1000 during the year and more.

## Enduring tragedy

While it was expected that the Obama administration with a solution centric approach dictated by the agenda for "change" would provide clear directions to ISAF strategy the shift in focus from a regional approach in March to reconciliation and reintegration with the Taliban in December indicates an innate lack of understanding of the basic configuration of conflict in the country based on roots of fundamentalism bred by the Taliban who have usurped the Pashtun liberal space through their campaign of terror all these years.

army in Pakistan which is a guarantor of the London Policy to deliver the Taliban remains in doubt with its obsession of strategic depth combined with growing signs of political instability with a running battle between the President and the Chief Justice. Thus General McChrystal's sound people centric approach which with greater investment of time by the coalition was assured of success may well fail to deliver by July 2011.

## Conclusion

The perilous security path denoted by a review of the strategy in Afghanistan however has not been without a silver lining. There is development in the country, though mainly restricted to urban and semi-urban areas. Afghans have shown a desire to overcome the vestiges of conflict and integrate with the world, the most recent example of which has been the triumph of the cricket team qualifying for the T-20 World Cup. Given the benefit of time, commitment and resources by the international community, Afghanistan will emerge as a stable and peaceful country

There is a tendency to apply conventional solutions to counter-insurgency conflicts with disastrous results.

The Taliban are relying on just such a legacy combined with Afghanistan's, "graveyard of Empires" reputation to wait for their turn in Kabul. The right strategy would be that of "Exhaustion," proposed by German historian of war, Hans Delbruck. It is time that the international community including India impresses on the United States and NATO to persevere and endure rather than cut their losses and exit leaving Afghanistan in the lurch. **DA**

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# dismantle PAKISTAN fulcrum

Haroun Mir

If President Obama wants his Af-Pak policy to succeed he will have to step on Pakistan's tail and force it to stop giving safe havens to all terrorist groups on both sides of the Durand Line. If he allows himself to be led up the garden path like how Musharraf did to Bush by serving up the small fry and protecting the masterminds, the consequences not just for Afghanistan and Pakistan but the whole world will be horrendous.

The border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan has become an important sanctuary for international terrorism and a breeding ground for radical and extremist Islamist groups. Despite the US and NATO's military commitment, the Taliban have been able to expand their territorial control in Afghanistan and threaten the stability of Pakistan. In addition, public support in the US and other allied countries for the "war on terror" is fading away, and the collapse of the Dutch government over its military commitment is a warning signal for the rest of those that have troops in Afghanistan. Furthermore, President Karzai does not consider the US as a vital ally anymore, and he has become an obstacle for the implementation of the US strategy in Afghanistan. In the next several months the development of military and political situation in Afghanistan and the degree of cooperation from Pakistan will determine the fate of Obama's Af-Pak strategy.

## Political vacuum

The political situation in Afghanistan remains fragile, and President Karzai emerged significantly weaker after last year's disputed presidential election. More than three months after his inauguration, his cabinet is still incomplete because the parliament twice rejected ministers who belong to his coalition partners, which created distrust and resentment between Karzai and the powerful powerbrokers such as General Dostum and the Shi'ite leaders. President Karzai is politically isolated and does not enjoy domestic and international political support as he did in 2004. A majority of people in the south, where the Taliban have been able to fill the vacuum of authority left by a dysfunctional government in Kabul, have become disillusioned with promises made by the US administration. Similarly, for a majority of people in the relatively stable northern provinces the legitimacy of the government in Kabul depends on the support it receives from

the international community rather than on its own strength. In addition, President Karzai has increasingly become suspicious of his international supporters and the growing tensions between him and the US administration has led to growing mutual mistrust.

The growing rift between Karzai and the US administration has pushed him into the hands of regional countries because he knows that the US and NATO presence in the country is temporary, whereas Afghanistan's neighbours and regional countries are permanent feature. He has been able to, very skillfully, maintain very friendly relations with all regional countries, despite their divergent interests in the country.

## Pashtun reservations

After his reelection, President Karzai focuses more on his legacy as a two-term elected President. He failed to become a national leader and has already lost the trust of

his fellow Pashtuns. The President does not want to be remembered in history as the leader who brought destruction to his own people because Pashtuns are the main victims of the conflict in Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan. Therefore, reconciliation with the Taliban will remain the core of his strategy in the next five years, even if it undermines US interests in the region.

## Flawed US policy

On the military side the US and alliance forces have failed to stabilise the country and the Taliban have been able to gain ground since 2006. One of the gravest mistakes made in 2002 was the decision to build only a small and relatively weak Afghan National Army of only 35,000 poorly armed soldiers. Even in 2008, the US decision to increase that number to 80,000 was arbitrary and flawed.

The recent decision by Obama's administration to increase the number of Afghan security forces up to 4,00,000 will enable the US military to shift responsibility of war from US and alliance to Afghans. But building strong security forces capable of taking greater responsibilities will meet a number of challenges. For instance Pakistan's military leadership is irritated at

the idea of a strong Afghan military that could take on their forces.


## Pressure on Pakistan

The US military surge will certainly weaken the Taliban and break down their momentum. But the US military could not defeat the Taliban as long as their leadership enjoyed sanctuary inside Pakistan, recruit indoctrinated young fighters in the Pakistani madrassas, and receive financial assistance from a variety of sources notably from sophisticated charity networks in the Gulf countries. The US military surge will only be effective if the Pakistani authorities are put under continued pressure to disrupt Taliban's networks of support and deny them sanctuary.

The US administration has turned a blind eye over the belligerent role of Pakistan in Afghanistan. The Pakistani authorities have received the US military by playing a double game. They have sometimes arrested Al-Qaeda operatives and gone after Pakistani Taliban, which threatened their own country. And at the same time they have provided safe havens for the leadership of Afghan Taliban. The Pakistani civilian and military leaders have openly declared that the stability of Afghanistan lies with Pakistan.

## Another subterfuge

The recent arrest of a number of Taliban leaders by the Pakistani authorities is difficult to interpret. Either it could be a policy shift because they are aware that the Obama administration will not anymore tolerate safe havens for the Taliban leaders in Pakistan and an eventual extension of drone attacks deep inside their territory is detrimental to the sovereignty of Pakistan. Or it could be the continuation of their deception by temporary appeasing of the the US administration in order to extract additional financial and military assistance.

Ultimately, the fate of the war against terrorism depends on the success of the US strategy. The US military success against the Taliban is necessary but not sufficient. In order to bring stability back to Afghanistan and prevent Pakistan from becoming a failed State, the US administration must use vigorous diplomacy both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. 

The writer is the Director of Afghanistan's Center for Research and Policy Studies, Kabul.



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1. Setting up of Computer Center and Supply of Teaching Aids
2. Supply of Furniture and Sports Goods
3. Setting up of Science Laboratories i.e Chemistry, Physics and Biology

The Indian government funded the rebuilding of the school and committed \$ 5 million for the restoration project. The restoration was completed in 2 years and the school was reopened on 28 August 2005, by President of Afghanistan, Sh. Hamid Karzai and Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh.

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Before the dispatch, each lot of DCB's was inspected by the technical experts of EdCIL.

A team of three members was invited from Kabul, Afghanistan, for training semi-skilled workers. This team was trained for assembling of the DCB's and they in turn trained the workers in Afghanistan. A pre-loaded CD was also given to local agency for demonstrating assembling of DCB's.

As on date the assignment has been completed with the support and cooperation of Indian Embassy at Kabul, Indian Embassy at Tehran, Iran and Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi.

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# AMERICA in Afghanistan: operational dilemmas

The US-led International Security Force sweep into the Taliban stronghold in Helmand province is a study in microcosm of American policy for the region. To surround 1000 Taliban fighters in a town and then allow as many as those who wanted to leave, to go with their weapons, was as harebrained as it could get. To be able to ever corner that many fully armed guerrilla fighters the US will need 20,000 troops if the British counter-terror paradigm in Malaya is the benchmark. China's Mao Zedong and Cuba's Che Guevara studies say 50,000 will now be needed to do the same job.



MAJ. GEN. (RETD.)  
AFSIR KARIM

The current American policy in Afghanistan raises a number of uncomfortable questions and doubts about what the Americans actually hope to achieve in Afghanistan at the end of the day. The US faces several strategic and operational dilemmas but its future policy options in this region are not being fully addressed, a number of observers have felt the need for clearer and a firmer strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The formulation of a long term policy for Afghanistan and Pakistan and the future US objectives in the region need greater elaboration. The growth of fundamentalism and widespread opposition to the American policies in Pakistan and its impact on the war in Afghanistan seem to have been glossed over. Pakistan-based terrorist groups associated with Al Qaeda openly preach jihad and continue to support attacks on US forces in Afghanistan.

### Epicentre

Pakistan is keeping its borders open for the Taliban where they find support, shelter and safe havens, they are free to recuperate and reorganize here out of reach of the US

forces. The task of the US forces to defeat or subdue the Taliban by use of force or to break up the Taliban by causing internal strife and dissidence within their ranks is extremely difficult in these circumstances.

A hasty American withdrawal from Afghanistan will not be good for the region or for the US until it is reasonably certain that the Taliban movement has been completely crushed and they will not be in a position to overthrow the secular government of President Karzai.

There continues to be a large credibility gap about the time frame set by the US administration to achieve its strategic goals in Afghanistan. Moreover, many Afghanistan experts believe these goals are unlikely to be achieved by sending thousands of troops or by trying to buy peace with the Taliban; what can be reasonably achieved in Afghanistan and in what time frame is still not clear to the American policy makers.

The American president referring to his "new, comprehensive strategy" unveiled last March said "This strategy acknowledges that power alone will not win this war - we also need diplomacy and development and good governance. And our new strategy



**There continues to be a large credibility gap about the time frame set by the US administration to achieve its strategic goals... what we can be reasonably achieved in Afghanistan and in what time frame is still not clear to the American policy makers**

the Taliban's momentum and increase Afghanistan's capacity over the next 18 months."

The three main ingredients of action plan of the US strategy in Afghanistan may be summarized as under:

- Boost the US forces by 30,000 US reinforcements to reverse the Taliban's momentum and shore up Afghanistan's security forces within 18 months.
- Step up programme to strengthen the weak and inept Afghan government to stand on its own feet.
- To disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaeda and its extremist allies with the support of Pakistan, where many Al Qaeda figures including Osama bin Laden are believed hiding.

### Exit strategy

Most observers of the current Afghan situation believe that there is no likelihood of Taliban being defeated or tamed in 18 months period, and there are serious doubts whether the induction of additional troops will be able to reverse the Taliban momentum. Afghan army or the police whose combat capabilities are extremely limited are unlikely to be in a position to take over security duties from foreign troops within 18 months. The Afghan National Army is largely made up from the remnants of Northern Alliance militias. It does not have the numbers, training or equipment needed to take over security of the country. Moreover, desertions, drug addiction and demoralisation are serious problems in this force. Afghan army and police officials themselves doubt whether 18 months is enough time for them to be ready for take over security duties in

the prevailing turbulent environments without the presence of US-NATO forces.

The US, however, cannot carry on an open-ended war with little chance of a clear victory hence the time frame. It is certain that the American public will in any case demand the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan sooner or later, regardless of what long-term costs withdrawal may involve. It seems if there is even a marginal improvement in the situation in Afghanistan Americans may work out a face saving exit strategy, declare victory when a particular high point is reached and quit.

Some observers believe that prolonged stay of American troops in Afghanistan will lead to very negative results for its neighbours and the world since it will increase support for the fundamentalist forces and marginalize the moderate groups both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The prospect of America leaving Afghanistan in the hands of Taliban should, however, cause greater concern; it will be catastrophic if the US forces are withdrawn prematurely, without breaking the backbone of the fundamentalist forces.

The war and the subsequent developments in Afghanistan have changed the internal dynamics of the region significantly and an untimely US troop withdrawal could prove dangerously unsettling for the entire region. There is little doubt that as soon as the American troops leave, the Taliban, the warlords and the Pakistani intelligence agencies would join hands to throw Karzai and his supporters out and install a fundamentalist regime loyal to Pakistan. No wonder Pakistan is following a wait and watch policy and doing very little to help the Americans win the war in Afghanistan.

### Taliban perception

The time frame indicated by President Obama in the broad terms gives the Taliban a hope that that American resolve to continue in Afghanistan is weakening and they have already won half the war. Lately the entire Taliban strategy seems to be to inflict maximum casualties on the American troops and exert greater pressure on their strongholds, hoping that this would hasten the American retreat. Any sign of reduction of US troops will encourage the Taliban to believe that the Americans have shot their bolt. Pakistan will play a pivotal role in this game; it will gradually make the logistic support of the American troops more problematic and at the same time increase logistic and military assistance to the Taliban.

Pakistan knows that a quick American victory will push a very large number of Taliban over the border into Pakistan, compounding the chaotic situation that is already prevailing in that country; a situation Pakistan would like to avoid at all costs. Pakistan obviously does not welcome the prospects of success of the US surge in Afghanistan.

In the present circumstances uncertainty prevails, David Kilcullen, a counterinsurgency expert observed cynically that if the basic parameters of fighting the war in Afghanistan remain the same, US and NATO troops will "fight valiantly for two years" and then declare themselves "defeated, and come home."

### India factor

The Pakistani opposition to Indian presence in Afghanistan and India-centric threat perceptions complicates the current situation and frustrates all US efforts to convince the Pakistan army to throw all their weight against the Taliban on their side of the border. Pakistan is using the Indian threat as an excuse for its inability to deploy the required number of its forces on its western borders, it continues to deploy the bulk of its forces on its border with India regardless of the American demands of deployment of more troops to fight militants on its western frontier.

As long as India and Pakistan remain at odds about various regional issues they will

be backing opposite sides in any political or military struggle in Kabul after the US withdrawal. Pakistan is bound to increase pressure in Kashmir to tie down Indian forces and continue terrorist attacks in other parts of India to keep it off balance, a dangerous prospect since both have nuclear weapons and in the event of a military confrontation between the two the situation may spin out of control.

The leaked report attributed to General Stanley McChrystal in September last year suggested that the issue should be handled with caution given Pakistani sensitivities about a big rise in India's presence in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

"Indian political and economic influence is increasing in Afghanistan, including significant development efforts and financial investment," it said. "In addition the current Afghan government is perceived by Islamabad to be pro-Indian. While Indian activities largely benefit the Afghan people, increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional tensions and encourage Pakistani counter-measures in Afghanistan or India."

Taking advantage of the American dependence for providing logistic support to its troops in Afghanistan, Pakistan has been demanding and getting more and more sophisticated arms and equipment from the US, and at this rate will emerge as a much stronger military power. Once Americans quit the scene, a stronger and more belligerent Pakistan aided and abetted by an ultra radical Taliban State in Afghanistan will pose serious military and political challenges to India. The ISI will increase its subversive games in the region and India will be the main target of these activities. In such a situation Pakistan will be in position to make sure the Indians find no quarter in Afghanistan.

### High stakes

India's interests are legitimate and substantive in Afghanistan as it is a part of its extended neighbourhood. The possibility of an early American withdrawal raises serious concern in India. Indian leadership cannot remain a mute spectator to a developing situation that spells great danger for her security and economic well

being. India must be prepared to deal with a situation when fundamentalists of various hues dominate the region and the ideology of Al Qaeda spreads far and wide.

Both America and India have high-stakes in combating Islamic extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Weak governments in these countries raise doubts about their capacity to stop the march of the fundamentalist forces. The dubious role of a section of Pakistan and Afghan security forces gives tremendous strategic advantage to the fundamentalist forces against the secular forces in both the countries.

Pakistan wants a friendly government in Afghanistan over which India has no influence. However, Afghanistan providing "strategic depth", to Pakistan, in the event of a no-holds-barred war with India, where Pakistani forces could withdraw and re-group and fight back is now considered an outdated concept even in Pakistan. Pakistan hopes that a pliable regime in Afghanistan would help end violence by Tehrik-e-Taliban and bring its lawless border lands under control. However, some observers believe once the Taliban succeed in Afghanistan, they will join hands with the Pakistani Taliban to establish a fundamentalist regime in Pakistan.

### Saudi manoeuvre

The recent London Conference on Afghanistan considered various options to solve the Afghan tangle; Karzai even consulted Iran, China in Istanbul on this matter. He also met the King of Saudi Arabia, and it is believed that the King has agreed to make arrangements to satisfy the Taliban high command, in other words an effort to form a government with good / willing or bought-over Taliban is being made.

The Taliban have, however, already rejected such a possibility outright as they now see victory close at hand and see no need of any compromise. Whatever Karzai and the US may offer to Taliban the initiative is with the Taliban and they are in no mood to share power with Karzai. It is evident that the compromise approach will not work in the present environment in Afghanistan.

India will be the worst affected State in the region in a scenario where Pakistan and the Taliban join forces to extend their influence in the entire south Asian region after the US-NATO forces are withdrawn from Afghanistan. Pakistan with its newly acquired weapons from America may be tempted to up the ante in Kashmir with disastrous consequences for the entire region and the world since there may be a possibility of nuclear weapons coming into play. **DA**

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Dr. Harsh V. Pant

# like the rest

It will be the height of naivette if Indians believe that there is no connection or orchestration between the Pakistan government's insistence on talks on Kashmir and much more and the openly stated possibility that not doing so will "encourage the terrorists". The Pune blast underscores all the vile games that are being played with the blood of innocents. India must defend itself and its strategic interests with everything at its command. We are not a soft nation but we have a long way to go to ensure failsafe internal security. Once that happens the terrorists and their masters in Pakistan will lose the leverage.

**E**ight years after the US military overthrew the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, top American diplomats and military officials joined their allies in London in January to devise plans to woo sections of the Taliban back to share power in Kabul. While the lure of money might encourage some Taliban to come forward, the initiative's success will depend on tackling the elephant in the room – the deep hostility and suspicion between Pakistan and India, as manifested in their opposing Afghan approach. Al Qaeda's base in Afghanistan may have brought the US to Afghanistan, but terrorism in the region has roots that go beyond the borders of Afghanistan.

### Reconciliation mantra?

The London Conference on Afghanistan attended by around 70 States is the latest in a series of attempts that underscore the rapidly diminishing appetite in the western capitals for the Afghanistan venture. Days before this much-hyped conference, senior US military commanders suggested that peace talks with the Taliban may be imminent and that they might even be invited to be a part of the government in Kabul. Hamid Karzai in London too declared that "reconciliation" with the Taliban would be essential to ending the war. He hopes that the \$ 500 million Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund proposed by the international allies of Kabul will be attractive enough to lure significant chunk of the Taliban fighters to the negotiating table.

But it is not clear if there will be any immediate impact on the ground in Afghanistan in response to these initiatives. The Taliban rejected the reconciliation plan and showed no willingness to enter into any negotiation process, at least publicly. Now, however, it is Pakistan that is planning to bring the Taliban and Afghan government together for peace talks. Karzai explicitly asked for support from Afghanistan's neighbours, especially

Pakistan, in bringing stability to his nation. Given Pakistan's close ties with the Taliban and its hosting of Taliban leader Mullah Omar's leadership in Balochistan, its active support is critical for any progress. But the growing influence of the Pakistan-backed Taliban in any deal would not be liked by India whose influence in Kabul has increased in post-Taliban Afghanistan, just as Pakistan has stalled in its efforts to curb extremists. Pakistan's failure to contain cross-border militancy has been a key factor behind its deteriorating relations with the Hamid Karzai government in Kabul.

### Dangerous triad

India's approach towards Afghanistan remains a function of its Pakistan policy. New Delhi views it as important that Islamabad not get a foothold in Afghanistan. The free hand that Pakistan managed to get in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal had serious implications for Indian security. A significant part of the terrorist infrastructure that Pakistan's security apparatus groomed in Afghanistan was directed against India, making India one of the biggest targets of Islamist extremism. India, therefore, would like to ensure that Pakistan's involvement in Afghani affairs remains minimal and that a fundamentalist regime like the Taliban does not take root again.

Pakistan, on the other hand, has viewed Afghanistan as an effective means of balancing out India's preponderance in South Asia. Good India-Afghanistan ties are seen by Pakistan as detrimental to its national security interests as the two States flank Pakistan's borders. A friendly political dispensation in Kabul is viewed by Pakistan as essential to escape the strategic vise of being caught between a powerful adversary in India in the east and an irredentist Afghanistan with claims on the Pashtun dominated areas in the west. Given its Pashtun-ethnic linkage with Afghanistan, Pakistan considers its role to be a privileged

one in the affairs of Afghanistan. Given these conflicting imperatives, both India and Pakistan have tried to neutralize the influence of each other in the affairs of Afghanistan.

### Daunting prospects

Pakistan's frustration at the loss of political influence in Afghanistan after the ouster of the Taliban has been compounded by the welcoming attitude of the Karzai government towards India, which has had friendly relations with the Afghan Northern Alliance led by Tajik leader Ahmed Shah Massoud. India's presence in Afghanistan has expanded over the last few years and it is one of the largest aid donors to Kabul, working to deliver humanitarian assistance as well as helping in nation building projects (worth over one billion dollars) in an effort to develop and enhance long-term local Afghan capabilities.

It is imperative for Pakistan and Afghanistan to co-operate if they are to tackle the threat posed by the Taliban and Al Qaeda combined. Yet Karzai remains suspicious of Pakistan. It seems unlikely that Pakistan intends to rein in the Taliban operating from its tribal areas. With the gathering consensus that the US has no stomach to be in Afghanistan for long, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence will do its best to bolster the Taliban so as to make Afghanistan a Taliban dominated client State. Moreover, with the belief that India is creating trouble in Baluchistan and the tribal areas, it is unlikely that the Pakistani army would abandon the militant groups it has relied on to fight as proxies in Afghanistan and in Indian Kashmir.

### American dilemma

But there is an increasing convergence between India and US in viewing Pakistan as the source of Afghanistan's insecurity. In recognizing that the borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan constitute the single most important threat to global





peace and security, arguing that Islamabad's security establishment is part of the problem rather than the solution, and asking India to join an international effort in managing the Af-Pak region, the US departed from South Asia policy first crafted in the aftermath of 11 September 2001.

Yet as the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated, the Pakistani security establishment managed to convince the US that Pakistan's inability to act against extremism and terrorism on its western borders was because of its tensions with India on its eastern frontiers. India remains concerned that the Obama administration seems to have given the Pakistan army the perfect alibi for not complying with American demands for credible

co-operation in the war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The Pakistan army now has very little incentive to reduce tensions with India in the hope of bargaining more from the US. And as Pakistan succeeds in convincing the West that the best way out of the present mess is to reach out to the "good Taliban," India's marginalization seems only to increase.

The risks to global security from a failure in Afghanistan are great. Abandoning the goal to establish a functioning Afghan State and a moderate Pakistan, would place greater pressure on Indian security. Pakistani intelligence would be emboldened to escalate terrorist attacks against India once it is satisfied that the Taliban would provide it strategic depth in Afghanistan. This

would surely force retaliation from India. Yet a peace deal that gives Pakistan and its Taliban friends a dominating role in Afghanistan is an unwelcome development for New Delhi. India fears rewarding bad behaviour would only embolden more hostility, a reasonable conclusion because of its past experience, making New Delhi even more reluctant to pursue a "peace process" with Islamabad.

### Dangers ahead

While the West ponders the prospects of bringing peace to Afghanistan, it needs to peel back the onion-like layers of sub-continental conflict rooted in Pakistan-India rivalry. Buying the loyalty of the Taliban or accepting a Pakistani-brokered deal in Kabul will only pave the way to another, perhaps even more dangerous conflict involving terrorist groups and nuclear armed neighbours.

Successive attacks on the Indian Embassy in Kabul for the last two years reinforce the challenging environment in which Indian personnel are working in Afghanistan to deliver humanitarian assistance as well as helping in nation building projects in myriad ways. India is building roads, providing medical facilities, helping with educational programmes in an effort to develop and enhance long-term local Afghan capabilities.

Towards this end, it has been a deliberate policy of India to refrain from giving its support a military dimension and so India's support programme has been civilian in its overall orientation. It is not a surprise therefore that India remains one of the most admired and loved countries for ordinary Afghans even as Western observers influenced by a propaganda campaign of Pakistan have viewed Indian



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involvement as problematic in so far as Pakistan is able to claim that India's involvement is aimed at undercutting Pakistan's influence. India's attempt at leveraging its soft power in Afghanistan is becoming increasingly risky.

### Strategic resolve

Though the security revamp undertaken after last year's attack has indisputably improved protection at the embassy, this latest attempt underscores the fact that as Indian profile in Afghanistan increases so will the attempts to demoralise civilians undertaking developmental and humanitarian work.

India must brace itself for a challenging time ahead, especially as the perception gains ground that the Taliban are on a rebound with a heightened sense of political uncertainty in Washington. For India there can be no question of scaling back its development work in Afghanistan. If anything such attacks should strengthen India's resolve to carry on with its assistance to its neighbour. But time has come for India to achieve some clarity on its strategic objectives vis-à-vis Afghanistan.

If Afghanistan is the most important frontier in combating terrorism targeted against India, then how long can India continue with its present policy trajectory whereby its civilians keep getting killed in pursuit of its developmental objectives with one of the most powerful militaries sitting idly by.

There is a general consensus in India that it should not send troops to Afghanistan. Yet beyond this there is little debate about what policy options it has if greater turbulence in Af-Pak region spills over into India. The traditional Indian stance that while it is happy to help the Afghan government in its reconstruction efforts, it will not be directly engaged in security operations is

increasingly becoming harder to sustain.

### Tit for tat

The time has come for India to seriously consider deploying troops in Afghanistan. India is threatened much more than the US by the return of the Taliban to Afghanistan. The consequence of abandoning the goal to establish a functioning Afghan State and a moderate Pakistan will be greater pressure on Indian security.

The brunt of escalating terrorism will be borne by India, which already has been described as "the sponge that protects" the West. A hurried US withdrawal with the Taliban still posing a threat to Afghanistan will have serious implications for India.

The ISI would be emboldened to set up terrorist attacks against India once it is satisfied that the Taliban would provide it strategic depth in Afghanistan and the jihadis will again end up becoming a diplomatic and military instrument of the Pakistani military-intelligence complex to be used against India and the Indians wherever possible.

It is true that Indian involvement in Afghanistan is seen by the West as provocative, especially as Pakistan uses the Indian involvement bogey to shield its own ineffectiveness in tackling the Taliban and Al Qaeda. However, that will always be the case.

Even now when India is focused on developmental assistance Pakistan keeps harping on India's role in Afghanistan, accusing Indian embassy in Kabul of spreading anti-Pakistani propaganda and Indian consulates in Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar and Jalalabad as means for Delhi to improve intelligence-gathering against it. Whatever India will do in Afghanistan, Pakistan will view it in worst possible light, so Pakistan's reaction to Indian involvement can't really be a measure of what strategy India should be adopting.

### Break free

The US does need help in putting into action its Af-Pak strategy that has been on hold for lack of troops, something that its close allies are not willing to help it with. Even the United Kingdom's resolve is wearing thin. *India should take this opportunity to re-define its strategy and demonstrate its role as a security provider in the region. It need not send its troops into Afghanistan but rather start helping out with training the Afghan Army.*

The Afghan National Army is far from being an effective organisation ready to take on battle hardened Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters. Indian military trainers can provide the necessary guidance. This will also allow India to fight the jihadis in Afghanistan rather than in its own streets.

There is also a larger issue at stake here. The Indian elite talks of India as a rising power in the international system. The world is waiting to see what that rise implies in real terms. *If India can't tackle challenges in its own backyard or at least contribute to bringing stability in the region, it is difficult to see how it can play the role of a global stakeholder.*

If India wants the world to recognise it as a global power, then the time has come for India to step up to the plate and the first step in that direction is to respond to the latest attack in Kabul with greater military engagement to support its developmental and political presence in Afghanistan. **DA**

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Brig. (Retd.)  
Chitranjan Sawant, VSM

# AFGHANISTAN: Liberation in sight?

Forget history, wherein the tactics and underlying principles of guerrilla warfare as enunciated by Mao Zedong and Che Guevara the early practitioners of the craft are embedded, the Americans and their allies appear to have lost track of geography as well. They have begun their campaign against the Taliban at Merja in Helmand province in the same ham-handed manner as they did in Somalia in East Africa many years earlier. Here the warlike tribes have a code all their own which makes it very **difficult for foreigners to fight sustained campaigns and win.** The British should know.

The Afghan inhabitants of Merja in Helmand province of southern Afghanistan are both scared and confused. The NATO command in Kabul has adopted a rather unorthodox strategy in planning and executing a major offensive against the Islamist terrorists, commonly called the Taliban. The US-led military alliance has widely publicised that a combined field outfit of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Afghan National Army (ANA) would be attacking Merja to search, locate and kill the Taliban. In this mother of all battles, no quarter would be asked for and none given. After the mission is successful, the Afghan Army would continue staying in Merja to prevent the Taliban from reoccupying the place of strategic importance.

## Taliban subterfuge

Elder Afghan tribe heads in many localities have indicated that some Taliban fighters have already left Merja whereas others are busy building defences, bunkers and erecting barbed wire fences. There is feverish activity among the Taliban forces that stayed back to bury as many anti-personnel and anti-tank mines as possible inside the town and along the roadside and footpaths leading to Merja. An Afghan elder, who was earlier with the Islamist terrorists and is a reformed soul now, told the embedded journalists that the residual Taliban forces are paying special attention to laying mines along the footpaths because the coalition forces are very fond of using the footpaths as per training. It is along similar footpaths elsewhere that the western forces had suffered maximum casualties. Their military psychology has not undergone any change and, therefore, they may have to pay for this folly with their life and limbs.

One wonders why some Taliban fighters have deserted posts and fled away. It is not so, assure the Taliban fighters who chose to stay behind and engage the outsiders, that is, Americans and Europeans, in fierce dogfights or close-quarter battles. Those who have gone away will return to engage the enemy as and when the need arises. The Taliban higher echelon will summon them back.

In a close-knit tribal society, everyone knows the whereabouts of everyone else. That explains why the Taliban insurgents do not have a digital message relay centre to communicate to the rank and file what the orders of the commander are. Sending a signal by a beat of drum, a bugle or a trumpet call or lighting fire to generate smoke to summon scattered troops are age-old tried and tested methods that have not been abandoned. Signalling by conventional methods is quite effective even now.

## Air power

The air power does not come into play when hand-to-hand fight is expected to take place. The blazing guns of the NATO troops and the Islamist Taliban do not leave enough space for them to deploy in extended line and let the air force gunships rain hell on the enemy. However, in the closing stages of the big battle American gunships would go into action to pin down the fleeing terrorists. Since it is a much publicised engagement of opposing forces, it would be in the interest of the American and European forces to crush the spine of Islamist insurgency so that it does not raise its head again in southern Afghanistan.

By the way, Helmand province and neighbouring areas are considered to be open air citadel of Taliban troops and the latter have already tasted blood in battle and their morale is high. Nevertheless, the Western commanders are determined not to leave anything to chance. A well planned strategy has been devised by battle hardened commanders. The plan will be executed by equally battle hardened non-commissioned officers and GIs who are better armed and better equipped to fight in the type of terrain that southern Afghanistan presents.

The tribal chiefs have been contacted and briefed by the public relations officers of the Western alliance. In any case quite a few tribal elders and chiefs are fed up of the see-saw battle and wish the outcome was decisive. It is understood that some money

has changed hands and the Afghan elders seem to be convinced that only the Western forces have sufficient money that would be pumped into projects of economic development of the backward Afghanistan.

Therefore, the civil population's backing for the NATO is likely to play a decisive role in the final outcome of the battle of Merja in the southern areas. It is common knowledge that the fence sitters would jump onto the bandwagon of the winning side at the first opportunity. So the Western commanders, egged on by their political masters back home, are now determined to register a decisive win and set the ball rolling for a bigger offensive elsewhere in Afghanistan.

## Afghan women

Now the time is ripe to muster, train and deploy Afghan women in battles against terrorists. If this scheme is successfully launched, one-half of the locked human force will be gainfully employed. Employment of woman force against the evil force of terror will indeed be a win-win situation. It is, however, easier said than done. We must not forget that Afghan culture and society are male dominated. They are the most conservative of all Islamic societies of the world. Perhaps the reason lies in the geographical location of Afghanistan. It is a land-locked country.

Although kings and warriors criss-crossed the country in their campaigns from time immemorial the local population was more concerned about protecting their women, home and hearth than imbibing knowledge or military tactics. Women were always under arrest in their own homes and rarely moved out to see the face of a school, what to say of an academy of war. Consequently, backwardness took strong roots and impoverished the country.

This phenomenon is being done away with now. Women are being empowered



**Women are being empowered educationally, economically and indeed socially. Now is the time to empower them militarily. Indeed, it is not next to impossible. If the Afghan government is able to do so successfully, more than half of the battle against the archaic Talibanism would have been won**

educationally, economically and indeed socially. Now is the time to empower them militarily. Indeed, it is not next to impossible. If the Afghan government is able to do so successfully, more than half of the battle against the archaic Talibanism would have been won.

## Indian support

India has all along been helping Afghanistan to be self reliant. India has been constructing roads, building hospitals, providing inputs for modern education and also supporting the Kabul government economically. The Afghans are happy with the Indian help. Both the government and the people wish to have more and more of it. Quite a few Indian workers, builders and engineers have sacrificed their lives on the soil of Afghanistan during the tour of duty. They have, however, not thought of beating a retreat. Helping the needy Afghan people is our *Dharma*, so say the India work force members stationed in Kabul and the interior areas too.

Pakistan does not relish the presence of India in Afghanistan. It has a sinister game plan. It thinks that the Western powers would be out of Afghanistan sooner or later. That will be the golden opportunity for Pakistan to rule Afghanistan through its terrorist-cousins like the Taliban and the Al Qaeda. If India continues her presence in Afghanistan and wields influence among the people and the local government, Pakistan's plan of usurping that country would be jeopardized. No wonder, Pakistan goes out of her way to keep India out of peace parleys in Ankara, London and so on. Pakistan fictitiously presents itself as the bulwark of defence against Islamic terror but keeps on helping the terrorists surreptitiously. The democracies of the world must call a spade a spade and keep Pakistan away so that it does not continue to be a mischief monger in Afghanistan.

## Final victory?

One who fights with determination is bound to win. If the commander entertains any doubt about the success of his own plan, he is bound to fail. It is meticulous planning, thorough execution and display of collective will to win that shapes the final outcome. All officers and men should stand like a phalanx behind the commander and execute his war plans with sincerity to register the final victory.

February 2010 appears to be the beginning of the end of Taliban in Afghanistan. That will also be the end of Pakistan's day dreaming. They will not be able to rule Afghans from Kabul by proxy using their protégé, the Taliban. In the wee hours of morning of 13 February combined force of 15,000 battle worthy officers and men have attacked the Taliban positions in Merja and Nad Ali, two towns considered to be citadels of terrorists and the hub of illegal opium trade in the Helmand province in southern Afghanistan.

The crack troops of the US Marine Corps landed in the town of Merja at the crack of dawn and secured important landmarks for their buddies who were foot slogging. A farmer said that there was sporadic gunfire but it stopped soon. Possibly the terrorists had melted away and those who remained in town to test the waters were waiting for the right moment to go into action. This town inhabited by 80,000 Afghans wore a deserted look as many men and women had fled before the much advertised and publicised attack began. The citizens had defied the warnings of the Taliban not to leave their homes because they could foresee the outcome of this massive build up of the coalition forces aided by the Afghan National Army and Afghan Police contingents. President Hamid Karzai had signed an order committing his forces to the major offensive against the Taliban. Major General Larry Nicholson of the NATO told the press corps "we are going in real big". They are pretty sure of

the success of the well planned offensive otherwise they would not have given such pre-action publicity.

## Joint operation

The joint NATO, Afghan offensive is codenamed "Moshtarak" (which means 'together'). The Western forces and the newly raised and trained Afghan Army have undertaken this joint offensive for the first time. It will be a real battle efficiency test of the Afghan National Army. On getting the Helmand province cleared of the Taliban terrorists, the charge of protecting and defending it from a counter-offensive and return of the Taliban will be that of the Afghan Army and the civil government. The signs of a change for the better are in the air and writing of annihilation of terror outfits is on the wall.

Indeed the aim of the entire exercise is to instil confidence in the civil population. They should feel reassured that after the NATO vanquishes the Islamist terror outfits, it will not quit the scene. In case it quits, the Afghan National Army will be there to stand shoulder to shoulder with the common people to defend his and her interests. Women should feel safe in the new dispensation and be assured of job offers to become economically independent. The girl child should feel assured of a seat in the school where she can go and study sans a *burqa* or a *hijab*.

The best way to change the Afghan society and liberate them from the clutches of Islamist terror is to liberate women both physically and intellectually. The present surge of the US troops and the resultant massive attack on citadels of terror will help achieve the aim of liberation of the common man. **DA**

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Ramtanu Maitra

# Foreign Investment: **IFFY FUTURE**

Afghanistan is at the cusp of international assistance between eras of extreme poverty and possible prosperity. Enormous natural resources await investment and exploration for the economic and social uplifting of the country. But foreign investment requires stable State which is being jeopardized by shifting policies of the major international stakeholders.



The January 28-29 London Conference, organised by Britain and attended by leaders and ministers of at least 60 nations, is considered by many in Washington to foreshadow a policy shift by the Obama administration vis-a-vis Afghanistan. Judging by events in and around that gathering, the much-ballyhooed Af-Pak policy is in the process of being taken over by Britain and Saudi Arabia. Having accepted the fact that it is unable to disrupt, dismantle and defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan, the United States now appears to be ready to tow the British-Saudi line, which is to bring back the Wahaabi-indoctrinated Taliban identified, curiously, as the good Taliban to share power in Kabul with the elected Afghan president, Hamid Karzai.

This shift, coming eight years after the United States, in alliance with the Tajik-Uzbek-dominated Northern Alliance, removed the Taliban from power in Kabul, is likely to send a shock wave through the world of foreign private and governmental investors. There the general reading has been that the United States would not be leaving Afghanistan before 2020 or so, and its commitment to keep the Taliban out would smooth the way to further investment opportunities.

### Concernment

There are good reasons for foreign investors to be uneasy about such a turn of events. During their short stay in power, the Taliban showed themselves to be anti-development, medieval Wahaabi-indoctrinated social reformers. They projected themselves to the people of Afghanistan as a religious party whose only objective in assuming power was to cleanse Afghanistan of all foreign influences. That by itself would stand out as an impediment for any foreign investor

interested in Afghanistan. But because the investment into Afghanistan following the US and NATO-led occupation has not visibly improved the country's economic condition, it would not be at all difficult for the Taliban, should they assume power in Kabul again, to convince the people that the foreign investors are as useless as the foreign occupiers.

Recently, Aziz Shams, spokesperson of the Afghanistan Ministry of Finance, pointed out that in the six years from 2003 to 2009 Afghanistan's annual revenue went up from \$ 207 million to \$ 803 million and is expected to reach \$ 1 billion this year. At the same time, the international community has given \$ 35.4 billion of the \$ 62 billion pledged to the war-torn country since 2002. Of this amount, \$ 8 billion went to the Afghan government and the rest went directly to private contractors and non-governmental organisations operating in the country under US-NATO aegis.

None of this money has helped the Afghans much. As one analyst pointed out, despite the \$ 35.4 billion in aid, the nation still ranks the second-poorest in the world, after Niger in West Africa, among the 182 countries considered in the 2009 Human Development Report prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The UNDP's human poverty index for 135 countries shows that 40.7 per cent of the estimated 25 million Afghans are not expected to live more than 40 years, 72 per cent are illiterate, 78 per cent do not have access to clean water and 39 per cent of children under five years are underweight, while the economic possibilities of an additional 20 per cent of the population are deemed "fragile." A report by leading NGO Oxfam says that one in five children dies before his or her fifth birthday.

### Little to show

It is not because the Kabul government kept investor's hands tied that all that foreign money did little for the country. In fact, Kabul is doing what it can to keep investors interested in Afghanistan. The current legislative framework, for example, allows for 100 per cent foreign ownership, full transferability of profits outside the country, international dispute resolution mechanisms and streamlined investment licensing procedures. In addition, the Afghan Investment Support Agency (AISA), set up to help investors negotiate government regulatory and licensing procedures, is a one-stop shop for licensing and corporate support across the country. AISA also oversees the construction of industrial parks throughout Afghanistan, areas which provide power and security to businesses that locate there. Investors in

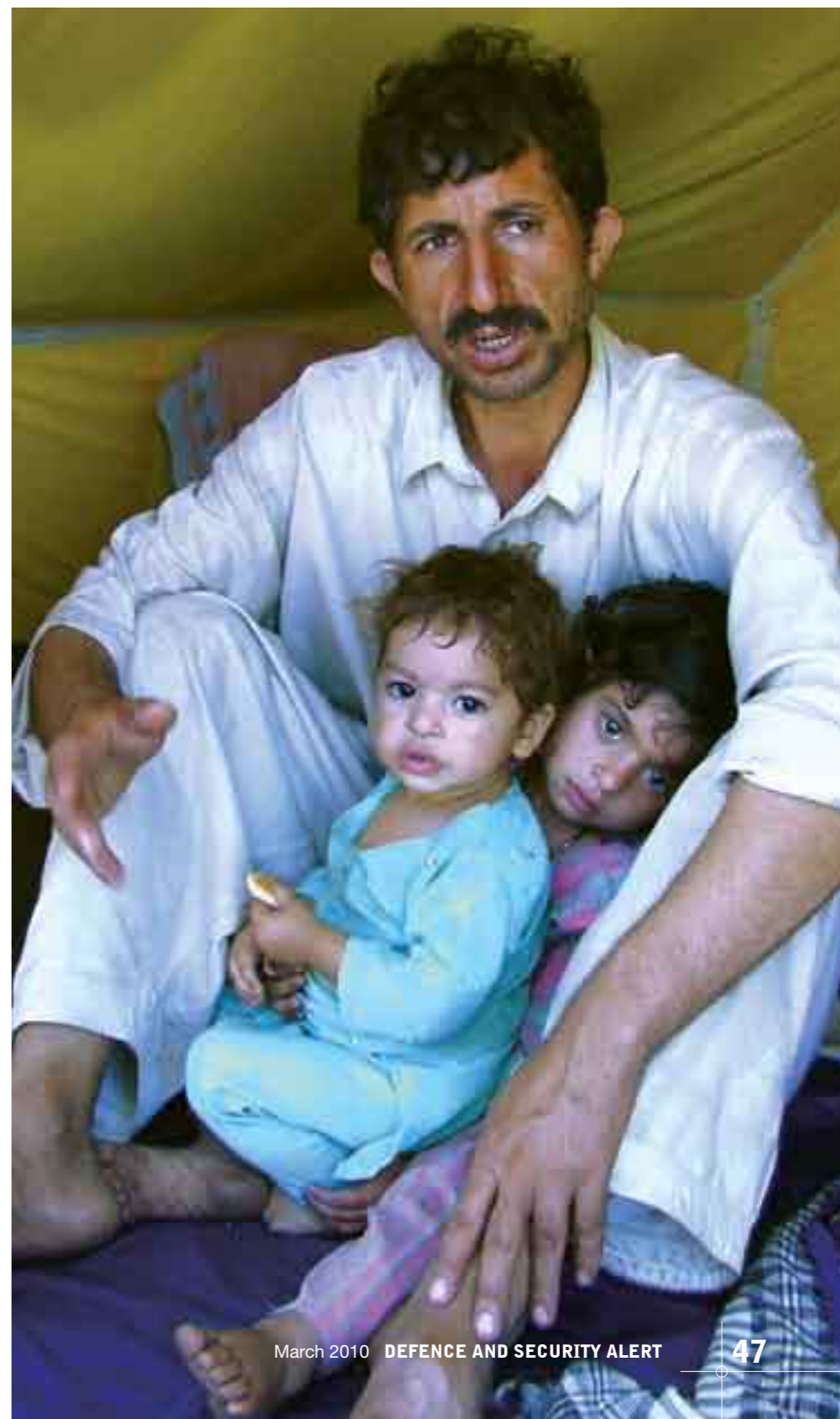
Afghanistan enjoy one of the best business environments in the area.

Also, foreign corporations in Afghanistan do not have to compete with subsidized government-owned businesses. The country introduced a liberal Private Investment Law in 2002 that allowed 100 per cent foreign ownership, full transferability of profits outside the country, international dispute resolution mechanisms and streamlined investment licensing procedures. Among Afghanistan's most lucrative investment sectors are exploration and extraction of natural resources; construction and reconstruction of infrastructure; agriculture and agribusiness; transportation and logistics; power generation and distribution; water supply and management and telecommunications.

However, Afghanistan did not receive much



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foreign investment. What it received was money from foreign donors. That donors' money, beside being controlled mostly by the donors themselves, were spent in enhancing security and making conditions favourable for the foreign troops and the nascent Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan Police to function.

There were a number of reasons why foreign investors were uneasy in putting down their money. The most important of which is the lack of security. Some smaller new investments came in which led the Afghan capital Kabul to boast a gleaming shopping mall and one new luxury hotel. Unfortunately, this resulted in a reinvigorated insurgency inflicting new attacks. Such incidents, a booming drug trade, and what one UN official labelled "endemic corruption made potential investors nervous". Analysts also cite the slow rebuilding of infrastructure, such as roads and electricity, and corruption as impediments to luring more investment

to Afghanistan. According to former Economics Minister Mohammed Jalil Shams, the government has completed just over half of the 6,000 km of new roads that it planned after the collapse of the Taliban in 2002.

Kabul government scored a major business coup when the Coca-Cola Company opened a \$ 25 million state-of-the-art bottling plant in Kabul in 2004, with President Karzai himself inaugurating the plant. Kedri Ozen, the company's communications manager for Eurasia and the Middle East, said Coca-Cola already has distribution and manufacturing facilities across Central Asia, and Afghanistan was what he calls the "missing link" in

oil and natural gas reserves remain unexploited. Great investment opportunities exist in this untouched market. According to a 2006 US Geological Survey assessment, undiscovered petroleum resources in northern Afghanistan range up to 36.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Estimates of oil range up to 3.6 billion barrels and estimates for natural gas liquids range up to 1,325 million barrels.

What is evident is that neither the government aid nor private investments were researched. Rather than strategic investments to build the Afghan economy, the focus has been so far on quick generation of export items. Lack of sophisticated understanding of the

1.5 million are rain-fed.

It is not only that inadequate investment has been made in the agricultural sector; the investments that were made had been very poorly conceived. Foreign correspondent Rajiv Chandrasekaran described the problem in detail in the June 19, 2009, *Washington Post*. Chandrasekaran pointed to one such project, where a private entrepreneur laid out a plan to transform a vacant tract near the city of Mazar-e Sharif, in the northern province of Balkh, into a sprawling commercial farm, with miles of strawberry fields and thousands of cashmere goats. Located in a relatively peaceful area, some 400 kilometers northwest of Kabul,

a plan to develop Afghanistan's agriculture. But officials at USAID, which has spent almost \$ 7.8 billion on Afghan reconstruction since 2001, maintain that, overall, their programmes, which have for the most part focused on infrastructure, have been effective. According to USAID, the agency has funded the construction of 1,600 miles of roads, the building or refurbishing of 680 schools, and the training of thousands of civil servants.

## India and China

By far the largest regional contributor to Afghanistan's reconstruction since 2002, India has invested about \$ 1.2 billion, primarily in educational and health

growing rapidly, its requirement of natural reserves is growing by the day and there is no question that copper is one of the essentials. The country's State Reserve Bureau has spent much of this year replenishing its strategic copper reserves.

In a successful bid in 2007, the Metallurgical Corporation of China won the right to develop the Aynak mine, about 30 kilometers southeast of Kabul. The company expects to produce about 220,000 tons of copper and has rights to half of the total. The high-profile Aynak investment is, however, only part of a larger Chinese investment plan. To establish a long-term presence in Afghanistan, China has also promised to invest hundreds of millions

## Mineral wealth

Afghanistan has substantial deposits of iron ore, gems and stones. It is also on the crossroad between Central Asian and Iranian oil and gas fields. The US and NATO presence in Afghanistan and general belief among the investors that Washington will not leave the country without establishing stability in Kabul, however long that might take, has drawn the attention of many foreign investors including India and China although the security situation and Kabul's inability to open up mining areas has kept most of the investors waiting. But that could all change when and if momentum from the London Conference builds up.



Coca-Cola's regional network. Since then, most foreign investments have occurred in the telecommunications sector. Afghanistan has now four major telecommunications companies in Afghanistan, having invested some \$ 1 billion. The other sector, investors have been attracted to, is construction. Some \$ 3 billion has been invested. In the industrial sector there has been around \$ 700 million investment. There have been investments in other sectors too.

The other likely major reason why the investors stayed away is the electricity shortage in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's

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physical economy and economic realities of Afghanistan were also evident.

## Agriculture

One area in which foreign investment could have benefitted the Afghan people enormously if it had been plentiful and efficiently managed is agriculture. Spean Jan Lalahand, lecturer and member of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Kabul, says that in the last eight years agriculture has not been a development priority for the Afghan government. This, he says, explains why no agricultural project has been successfully implemented in the country. Yet improving exports could be a prime source of revenue for agricultural producers, he stresses. Investment there can strengthen the country's economic base.

According to Mohammad Ramin Atiqzad, secretary general of the Central Statistics Office of Afghanistan, 80 per cent of Afghans depend on farming activities as their main source of livelihood. And according to Afghanistan's deputy Minister of Agriculture, Saleem Khan Kunduzi, much of the cultivatable land in Afghanistan is now unused. Of this fallow land, 2.1 million hectares are irrigable and

Mazar-e-Sharif is the nation's second-largest city, and is in better shape than much of the country, as it managed to avoid most of the last 30 years of war.

From the look of it, it was not a bad place to develop such a farm. So when the private company abandoned the project, realizing that the ground condition does not allow water to be held to nourish the strawberry plants, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) decided to go it alone. It allocated \$ 40 million in reconstruction money to the venture, and directed a contractor to hire workers and purchase equipment, Chandrasekaran reported. Not until a year later, after several million dollars had been spent, did agency officials figure out why the Afghans had not cultivated the land themselves: the water and soil were too salty to grow crops.

It was a total waste of resources. It was a diversion of reconstruction money from other more effective and beneficial projects, the Post quoted Frauke de Weijer, a development specialist who worked with USAID contractors building the farm. It was evident that it was the idea of a cash crop that could be sold to the outside world that had inspired USAID officials, and not

infrastructure, as well as helping to rebuild airports and power plants. India has made a long-term commitment to Afghanistan's education system by establishing the country's first agricultural university. Despite being relatively non-functional today, agriculture remains the core of Afghanistan's GDP.

Indian investment in Afghanistan is not simply helping to rebuild the country's basic infrastructure, devastated by 30 years of war. India believes that a prominent presence in Afghanistan will enable it to counter Pakistan's influence in Kabul. India wants new land routes to be able to move goods to Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan. Pakistan is wary of providing a land route to India, since the two countries are competing for the same consumer goods market in Afghanistan, said a March 27, 2007 op-ed in the Lahore-based *Daily Times*. Pakistan currently allows Afghanistan transit rights for its exports to India, but does not allow goods to move from India to Afghanistan.

Another non-western major investor in Afghanistan is China, which has made a \$ 3.5 billion investment in Afghanistan's Aynak copper mine. Since China is

more in associated infrastructure projects there. China's presence in areas where the West is keen to exert, or maintain, its influence, has recently come under the proverbial magnifying glass. According to some analysts, China's inclusion of associated infrastructure projects in its bid to develop the Aynak mine was to undermine the other (read Western) bidders. Hence, it is controversial.

No doubt, China is getting serious about investing in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's ambassador to China, Sultan Ahmad Baheen, says his government has asked Beijing to open the narrow Afghan-China border. Baheen reports that China has pledged to conduct a feasibility study, but nothing has come of it yet. If we have this link, for sure the Afghan people [will] benefit. So this is why we propose to the Chinese to build a road, even a railroad from this Wakhan Corridor to Afghanistan, he said in an interview in his office. China's border with Afghanistan is only 46 miles long, with the narrow Wakhan Corridor a sliver of mountainous land that was once part of the ancient trade route known as the Silk Route on the Afghan side.

Until talks with the Taliban become public, however, it will not be clear what the future holds for foreign investors. The question hanging in the air is what the West will demand of the Taliban as a *quid pro quo* to putting them back into power in Kabul. There are rumblings already heard in Washington about China's non-ethical securing of rights in connection with the Aynak copper mine. Will the West demand from the Taliban the exclusive right to develop its natural resources and become the main players in resource-related developments? If that happens, there will be a few sore losers. And, you can count China, India and Russia among them. **DA**

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# Afghanistan: time to curb the law of inertia



World history is replete with examples that Nation building has never been accomplished by an external or occupying power. Active support and participation of the local people only can initiate the process of reconciliation, transform a war-ravaged Nation and lead it to a path of Peace and Progress.



Luis Peral

US President Barack Obama's solemn speech at West Point Academy in New York<sup>1</sup> on 1 December 2009 was intended to mark a new beginning in the US response to the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan after months of discussions on a new strategic approach. General Stanley McChrystal, the US Commander in Afghanistan, had indeed confirmed by mid-summer that the strategy of the coalition forces was self-defeating, and that new military and civilian resources would be needed to prevent defeat. In terms of numbers, his request has been satisfied, considering that supplementary troops will be provided by allied countries. In this sense, Obama's speech constitutes a clear - albeit implicit - endorsement of General McChrystal's fundamental plea that increased military power was required in order to facilitate a different strategic approach: protecting the civilian population in Afghanistan. It remains to be seen whether the increase in troops will allow for a restoration of confidence among all actors involved. In any case, some of the fundamental questions remain exclusively in Afghan hands. The establishment or strengthening of an effective civilian multilateral leadership for the operations in Afghanistan and avoiding a repeat of the misleading strategy in Pakistan

both remain critical challenges for the international community.

### Obama's basic dilemma

President Obama confirmed his plan to quickly dispatch 30,000 extra troops - perhaps within six months - to secure main population centres in Afghanistan and to reverse the gains of the insurgency. This would take place in parallel with the accelerated training of Afghan security forces which should allow for a handover process that would begin in July 2011.

The main new feature is that of linking a sudden troop build-up with the creation of conditions for withdrawal, in a sort of 'big bang' approach. This resembles the Bush Administration's plan for disengagement in Iraq; even the number of support troops coincides.<sup>2</sup> It cannot come as a surprise however. The latest course of action in Afghanistan was proposed by General McChrystal, who - as well as most of the advisors he appointed to make an initial assessment of the situation on the ground - has been involved in the Iraqi disengagement scheme. However, Obama has been more ambitious than his predecessor in that he has set a deadline for initiating withdrawal. Yet it is for that reason that he is now confronted with

a dilemma that is difficult to resolve. Obama's strongest justification for sending troops is that a vital threat remains for Americans, whose epicentre is said to be in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. But if he is "convinced that [the] security [of the American people and the rest of the world] is at stake", and concerned at the prospect of an al-Qaeda takeover of a nuclear-armed Pakistan, withdrawal ought to be contemplated only when such threats no longer exist or are significantly diminished. If, on the other hand, "the days of providing a blank cheque [to the Afghan Government] are over," and the US government is "clear about what [they] expect from those who receive [their] assistance", withdrawal should be conditional upon the effective performance by their Afghan counterparts after a set period. Combining both lines of reasoning, however, it would appear that any eventual underperformance of the Afghans would elevate the threat posed to the American people, thereby warranting the maintenance or possible escalation of the military effort beyond July 2011. This seems at odds with any commitment to initiate withdrawal unless of course the President believes that the troop increase will have no impact on diminishing this

1. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2009/12/01/new-way-forward-presidents-address>.

2. President Bush said at the time that 21,000 additional troops would be needed, but the number in fact approached 30,000. The strategy was officially considered 'successful' in ending the war, and indeed President Obama has established a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq on this basis. But the fact that Sunni Arab insurgents turned against Al-Qaeda and stopped fighting against Shi'ite Muslims and foreign troops - which entailed a de-escalation of violence - had little to do with the US military surge. It was crucial, though, that promises were made - although they are still largely unfulfilled - on the future integration of Sunni militants into the Iraqi security forces, and that the US was ready to help organise and finance local security forces as an intermediate step.

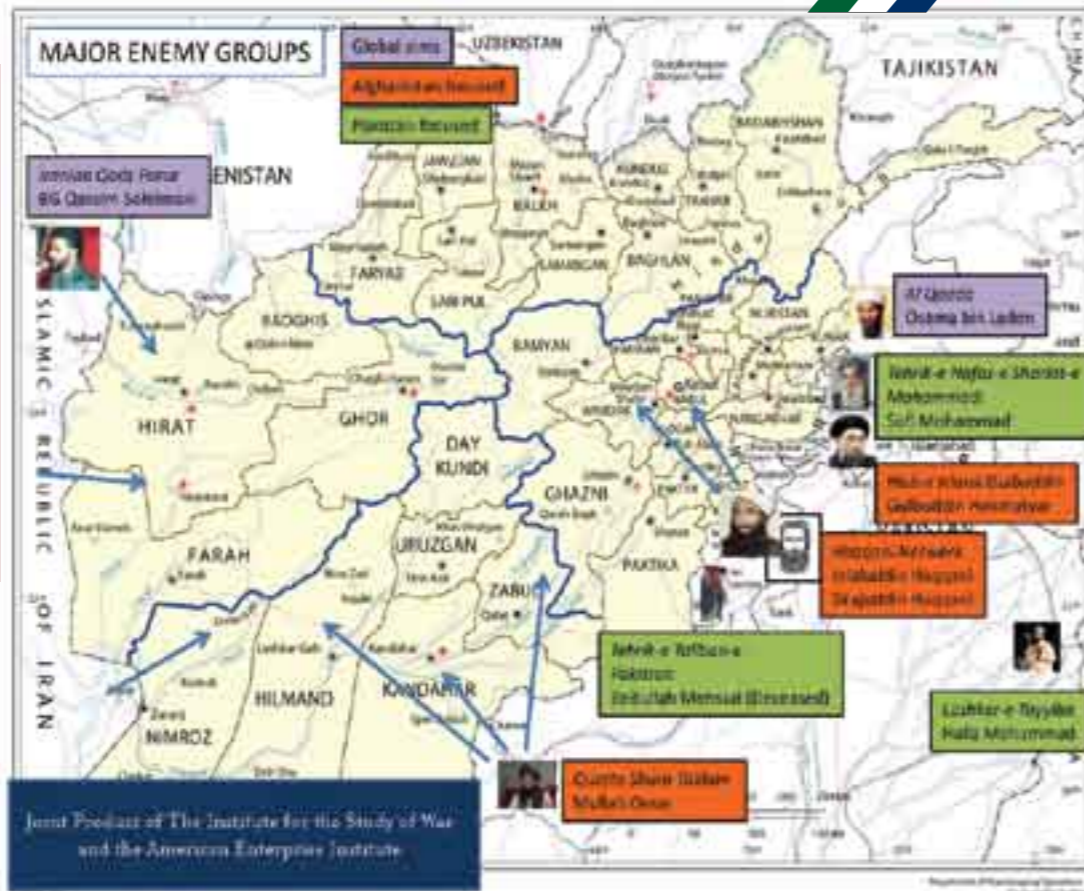
The establishment or strengthening of an effective civilian multilateral leadership for the operations in Afghanistan and avoiding a repeat of the misleading strategy in Pakistan both remain critical challenges for the international community

vital threat, in which case troops could be withdrawn at any time, but a build-up would perhaps not be justified.

### The essential of a non-military solution

The conviction that the behaviour of international troops in Afghanistan has contributed to the problem is the most relevant aspect of General McChrystal's new military strategic approach, which was devised upon his appointment as Commander of the US operation CSTC-A and ISAF Commander in mid-June 2009. According to the new double-hatted Commander, success in Afghanistan would be achieved when ISAF shifts its focus from killing insurgents and turns its attention to the protection of the civilian population. This appears to be precisely the basis of his plea for an extra 40,000 troops.<sup>3</sup>

The underlying conviction of General McChrystal is that ISAF's past actions were self-defeating, since the over-reliance on firepower had not only seriously undermined ISAF's legitimacy and alienated Afghans, but it had actually contributed to the strength of the insurgency instead of weakening or eliminating it.<sup>4</sup> General McChrystal considers that the implementation of this fundamental shift in military strategy



requires more troops – which is debatable - but apart from that, it seems unwise that discussions and announcements on troop figures are overshadowing the ultimate strategic interest of the request. Indeed, on the occasion of his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo on 10 December, President Obama elevated such interest and finally coupled it with full compliance with international humanitarian law: “Where force is necessary, we have a moral and strategic interest in binding ourselves to certain rules of conduct. And even as we confront a vicious adversary that abides by no rules, I believe the United States of America must remain a standard bearer in the conduct of war... and that is why I have reaffirmed America's commitment to abide by the Geneva Conventions.”<sup>5</sup>

This logic alone would have justified an increase of troops, since it is

evident that working more closely with the population requires far more human resources than bombing areas where insurgents supposedly live. Yet, the military strategy necessary for implementing this guiding principle based on international norms and which lies entirely under the responsibility of General McChrystal is simply one aspect - although a critical one - of the international strategy for Afghanistan which strives to and needs to be multilateral.

ISAF countries seem to be aware of this. Only three days after Obama's speech at West Point, a nuanced and balanced Declaration of 4 December was adopted at NATO headquarters. The 43 Ministers of Foreign Affairs of ISAF contributing countries - the US Secretary of State among them - expressed in a more cogent manner the way in which this new strategy could be shaped.<sup>6</sup> Having expressed their will that Afghanistan “must never again

3. This new approach was first reflected in the ISAF revised Tactical Directive of 2 July 2009, offering guidance regarding the use of force and updating the guidance given by the previous COMISAF in October 2008 (see releasable portions at: [http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official\\_texts/Tacti-cal\\_Directive\\_090706.pdf](http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/Tacti-cal_Directive_090706.pdf)).

4 This conviction is illustrated in the ISAF Counterinsurgency Guidance released on 26 August in the following terms: kinetic insurgent action has resulted in more violence partly because ‘attrition maths’ does not work in a conventional way in Afghan society, where any two insurgents killed out of ten are related to many others ‘who will want vengeance’, so that ‘10 minus 2 equals 20 (or more) [willing insurgents] rather than 8’. ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance, International Security Assistance Force, Kabul Afghanistan (no date on the document posted on ISAF's official website on 26 August 2009; <http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/pressreleases/2009/08/pr090827-643.html>), p. 2.

5. Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, Oslo City Hall, Oslo, Norway; 10 December 2009; <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize>.

6. Statement on Afghanistan, by Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Nations participating in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF); Press Release: (2009) 191; [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_59701.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_59701.htm?mode=pressrelease).

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Despite the debate's focus - particularly in the US - on the number of troops which are required during the 'transition period' as it is now called, there is also agreement on the need to work towards a political settlement in Afghanistan. It is also clear that reconciliation can only be achieved by Afghans and among Afghans, with external support only at their request. This demonstrates the limits of international action

become a safe haven for terrorism", they committed themselves to "contributing to a better future for the Afghan people" while acknowledging that the "future of Afghanistan and the stability of the region are directly linked to the security of our own countries, our own citizens and the wider international community".

The core message of the Declaration was that "the ISAF operation will have, as a priority, the protection of the Afghan people, building Afghan security capacity and facilitating governance and development." The Ministers thus reiterated security, development and governance as pillars of the international strategy for reinforcing Afghan capacity,<sup>7</sup> and specifically mentioned for the first time the protection of the civilian population as the only direct, unqualified dimension of security.

This can only be related to General McChrystal's assessment that the behaviour

of international troops in not providing effective protection has been until now detrimental to the ISAF mission. Furthermore, while ISAF countries pledged some 7,000 troops to supplement those pledged by the Obama Administration in order to satisfy McChrystal's requirement, they carefully avoided using the word 'war' in the Declaration, a word that featured prominently in Obama's speeches of 1 and 10 December. In parallel to reaffirming their commitment to increase civilian resources and development aid, ISAF contributing countries made for the first time an unambiguous call for a political settlement in Afghanistan. The Declaration expressed support to the Afghan authorities on reintegration issues and indicated the preparedness of ISAF to contribute to a process of reconciliation with insurgent groups, while conceding that both these processes must be Afghan-led and

Afghan-owned. In particular, according to NATO's account of the meeting, Ministers resolved that while ISAF efforts will focus on persuading low-level fighters to lay down their arms and reintegrate into Afghan society, they may also have a role in supporting reconciliation efforts should a specific request be made by the Afghan Government.<sup>8</sup> In the Action Plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan adopted last October, the Council of the European Union also showed its readiness to assist the Afghan Government in addressing the political challenges of reintegration and reconciliation.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the basic elements for a non-military solution in Afghanistan seem to be clear in the minds of the ISAF contributing countries, 25 of whom are also EU Member States. Reconciliation is the only new addition to the well-described and desired strategy of Afghanisation along the core functions of the State, which

would allow for military disengagement.

Despite the debate's focus - particularly in the US - on the number of troops which are required during the 'transition period' as it is now called, there is also agreement on the need to work towards a political settlement in Afghanistan. It is also clear that reconciliation can only be achieved by Afghans and among Afghans, with external support only at their request. This demonstrates the limits of international action. Inasmuch as the process of national reconciliation necessitates the ability and willingness to accommodate different internal movements, the international community should not expect Afghans to adopt a liberation movement against extremism. Nor should it undermine the authority of the Afghan Government, without whom no strategy can ever be implemented. Not even the accusation of corruption - which should be extended to international contractors and substantiated before local and international independent monitoring and justice mechanisms - warrants the retention of parallel structures in Afghanistan which actually contribute to the weakness of local authorities.<sup>10</sup> Nation-building was never accomplished by an external power. Not even State-building is feasible without the active support of the local population. Most of the substantial work that needs to be done in Afghanistan - with the obvious exception of training - is out of the hands of the US or the Coalition. Thus, the 18-month deadline that Obama set is arguably a sign

of impatience; as it approaches however, it may end up creating a feeling of anxiety within his Administration.

### The weakness of implementation

Obama did refer to the critical importance of the situation in Pakistan during his December 1 speech, but he did not develop his ideas on the international civilian leadership required to stimulate and facilitate the internal process of reconciliation. In parallel with the transformation of ISAF, these are the key two areas on which the international community has to concentrate all its efforts in the coming years in order to make a difference in Afghanistan. They are not contemplated either - albeit for different reasons - in the McChrystal-ISAF strategy for Afghanistan, although they are crucial for its effective implementation. Pakistan is not under the jurisdiction of ISAF and should not be subject to the same strategy as Afghanistan for obvious reasons. The International operations with respect to the two countries should not only be connected but also consistent. The fact is however, that the US and Pakistani military intervention strategies are at odds with McChrystal's guiding principle, presenting a real risk that the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan will be replicated in Pakistan. Furthermore, the Pakistani Government seems committed to the use of force against the Taliban in response to widely-held assumptions that the al-Qaeda leadership

has been waiting for its captors in the mountains of Waziristan since 2001 and that the Pakistani Taliban are sheltering Afghan Taliban who in turn are providing support to al-Qaeda with the acquiescence of the Pakistani Government.

Indeed, the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded to Obama's speech by delivering a laconic declaration expressing its confidence that "there would be no adverse fallout on Pakistan" as a consequence of a military escalation in Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup> But fear works in both ways: the ultimate paradox would be that an eventual breakthrough in Afghanistan due to a change of behaviour within the military is ultimately jeopardised by a reinvigoration of the insurgency in Pakistan.

The rule of discretion applied in official documents and speeches fails to conceal the fact that US drones drop bombs incessantly on the "epicentre of violent extremism" and that it appears Pakistan has finally agreed to undertake intensive military operations against the Pakistani Taliban; the general perception remains that this is to the exclusion of the Afghan Taliban sheltered in Pakistan. In this context, the EU Council has urged Pakistan to "meet its obligations to protect the civilian population".<sup>12</sup> As General McChrystal's assessment shows, indiscriminate attacks do not weaken insurgencies, they fuel them; and the Afghan population as well as the international community are already witnessing the consequences

7. See, in particular, *Building on Success. The London Conference on Afghanistan. 31 January - 1 February 2006. The Afghanistan Compact* (<http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20080205132101/fco.gov.uk/files/kfile/20060130%20afghanistan%20compact%20final%20final,0.doc>).

8. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-03EBF034-4CB00234/natolive/news\\_59935.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-03EBF034-4CB00234/natolive/news_59935.htm), checked on 4 December 2009. In the *Bucharest Summit Declaration, the Heads of State and Government of ISAF countries merely made an overoptimistic and clearly out of context reference to reconciliation* ("a reconciliation process for national unity has begun [in Afghanistan] and basic security and infrastructure have improved"), but while reintegration gets no mention at all (par. 2: see ISAF's *Strategic Vision. Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of the Nations contributing to the UN-mandated NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan*; [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8444.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8444.htm?mode=pressrelease)). 9 The Council also establishes a link between reintegration and specific assistance programmes by stressing that "leading combatants away from the path of violence requires providing them with alternative aspirations and livelihoods" (par. 7 of the *Plan of Action*; see *Strengthening EU Action in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Council Conclusions*; 2971st External Relations Council meeting, Luxembourg, 27 October 2009;

9. [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/110789.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/110789.pdf)).

10 It should be recalled in this sense that the EU Action plan calls for an alignment of Member States' bilateral civilian contribution schemes while making a recurrent appeal to the US to offer increasing direct budget support to the Afghan Government.

11 [http://www.mofa.gov.pk/Press\\_Releases/2009/Dec/PR\\_440\\_09.htm](http://www.mofa.gov.pk/Press_Releases/2009/Dec/PR_440_09.htm).

12 *Strengthening EU Action in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Section B, Situation in Pakistan*.



Brig. (Retd.)  
Arun Sahgal

# Pak agenda


Recent developments in the Af-Pak region are pointers to devious games of intrigue and counter-intrigue being played by all the stakeholders, from inside and outside of Afghanistan. Pakistan's aspiration of regaining strategic depth in Afghanistan, is at the centre of this conundrum being created by naked ambitions of Pakistan military honchos. Indian strategic interests must be protected and strategic assets created to offset insidious developments that may seriously impact Indian security.

of a misleading military strategy. The US pledge to triple development aid to Pakistan does not of course compensate for the devastating humanitarian and political consequences of the military operations in Pakistan. The second critical weakness of the international operation in Afghanistan is the lack of effective international leadership to facilitate a reconciliation process. In this sense, the law of inertia has also been determinative, since the US military juggernaut that has remained in place for so many years has stood in the way of a multilateral civilian leadership taking root in Afghanistan. And ISAF cannot offer a different leadership today, as it still constitutes to a great extent a fragmented and rather inefficient operation. Furthermore, since each contributing country takes direct responsibility for its own resources and its disenchanting public scrutinises governmental action, most of their efforts - in particular those of the smallest national contingents - are directed towards self-preservation and self-defence, rendering these forces largely ineffective in protecting the local population. Finally, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was never granted the functional capacity to discharge its international mandate of

coordinating international civilian action. These days, it seems that even the authority of its head Kai Eide is at stake following a past disagreement between him and certain US and international representatives concerning the response to the August 2009 election fraud.

### Concluding remarks

The context that has resulted from the originally unilateral retaliatory conception of the operation in Afghanistan, together with the solemn speech of President Obama and the myriad of reactions to it, represent a blunt confirmation that the US military is still in the lead in Afghanistan. Despite Obama's mention of the importance of the implementation of the US agricultural programme in Afghanistan, and the fact that sufficient funds will surely be devoted to it, one of the main remaining problems is the question of who will lead and consolidate all civilian efforts - from development to capacity-building - within the different levels of governance and the rule of law. General McChrystal should resist the temptation to lead any other operation in Afghanistan beyond the Herculean one: transforming the operational culture of ISAF so that it finally serves the overarching principle of the protection of the civilian population.

The new and existing forces in Afghanistan should only play a supportive, subsidiary role as regards the civilian dimension of the international operation, which should become truly multilateral in order to create the necessary neutral space for reconciliation and reintegration. The question that remains however is: who should then assume leadership of the foreign deployments in Afghanistan? The real challenge for President Obama in the next 18 months is to identify and fully support an effective multilateral civilian leadership in Afghanistan, one that should allow for a phasing out of the American military presence. Having expressed his will on the latter, he now needs to curb the law of inertia. 

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## Two Conferences

The genesis of current developments which include, integration of ideologically indifferent low level cadres of the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani and other groups is part of blatant attempt by Pakistan to play the broker's role in any future stabilisation strategy in Afghanistan much to the chagrin of Karzai and his supporters in the government. In that sense the two back to

back conferences, one held at Istanbul and second in London were path breakers from the normal discourse of surge and stability in Afghanistan.

The Istanbul Conference not only allowed Pakistan to hijack the proposed US-envisaged regional powers approach to solution of Afghanistan conflict agenda by involving Islamic Nations Coalition comprising Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and a handful of Central Asian Republics

perspective and going so far to acquiesce highlights western acknowledgment of Pakistani doctrine of strategic depth in Afghanistan.

## Stabilisation moves

Post enunciation of Version 2.0 of president Obama's Af-Pak strategy in November 2009, it should be clear that far from seeking greater compellance from Pakistani military to support its counter-



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Post enunciation of Version 2.0 of president Obama's Af-Pak strategy in November 2009, it should be clear that far from seeking greater compellance from Pakistani military to support its counter-intelligence strategy in Af-Pak it has made them collaborators in their Afghan stabilisation strategy

bordering Afghanistan, with the explicit aim of shaping the reconciliation agenda and importantly denying India a strategic role which it sees as part of Indian strategy of Pakistani encirclement.

The second and even more important was to impress upon its western interlocutors that despite its perceived duplicitous commitment to war on terror it remains a central player in any far reaching resolution of Afghan Imbroglio. The explanation that the conference included contiguous states does not cut much ice as UAE, Saudi Arabia and even Turkey are hardly contiguous to Afghanistan. In a sense it was a crass attempt to keep India out of any regional approach.

Interestingly the approach of Islamic nations backed regional approach was first articulated by Pakistani interlocutors comprising senior diplomats and military officials during Track II meeting held in October 2009. They openly acknowledged that the only regional approach acceptable to Pakistan was one that involved Islamic nations other than Arabs. No effort made either by the US or NATO to change the

intelligence strategy in Af-Pak it has made them collaborators in their Afghan stabilisation strategy. This is underscored by the fact that both Gen. Kayani and ISI Chief attended the conference which unmistakably alludes to the notion of Afghan Taliban being Pakistani military's strategic assets and acknowledgment of their ability to manipulate them to shape favourable outcome of the conflict in Afghanistan. This is a huge development that will allow Pakistan to shape future discourse in Afghanistan and harbinger of bringing pro-Pakistan elements into future Afghan power structure.

Vindication of Pakistani centrality in conflict resolution in Afghanistan and its role in proposed reconciliation with 'Taliban', in a sense is the victory of Pakistani militaries attempt at de-hyphenating Pakistan from the American Af-Pak strategy. In fact Pakistan which till yesterday was part of the problem in terms of cross border movement of militants, sanctuaries for insurgent groups and attacks on NATO logistic supply chain together with less than successful counter-insurgency campaign is now part of the

solution to assist West in the emergence of Afghanistan as a moderate democratic Islamic nation.

The basic approach formalised is aimed at weaning away non-ideological and "moderate" Taliban, fighters with the aim of their eventual participation in the national governance. These outfits which have consistently waged war on US and NATO forces in Afghanistan for the last ten years are an integral part of Pakistani Army's grand strategy of inducing strategic fatigue and eventual mission failure in Afghanistan. A process which Pakistani military clearly wants to initially broker and eventually control, in a sense it is an acknowledgment by Western Coalition of the untenability of counter-insurgency strategy, falling political support at home and acceptance of little way forward without engaging the Taliban in dialogue.

Surprisingly there is no talk of militarily defeating Taliban, rebuilding Afghanistan or even promoting democracy. In fact the focus appears to be on creating conditions over the defined time period beginning next 18 months or so for creating 'notional stability' to allow foreign orchestrated

withdrawal commensurate with presidential announcement.

Coming as it is within months of Obama's November review of Af-Pak strategy and the proposed surge with lofty goals of clear hold and build populated centres as part of US doctrine of counter-insurgency the only conclusion that can be drawn is that US and NATO allies have come to basic determination that war in Afghanistan cannot be won. A strategy of what I call "Orchestrated Withdrawal" is being put in place.

## Centrality of Pakistan

These developments making Pakistan a key actor even as its cooperation in counter insurgency operations remains at best lackadaisical and operations in south Waziristan less than effective, with TTP sanctuaries largely intact despite claimed deployment of 1,40,000 troops in counter insurgency campaign. However such is the nature of dependence on Pakistan particularly in terms of logistic supplies that despite the policy of compellance or cooperation not working and Pakistani military having suspended operations in southern Waziristan it continues to remain

central to the American Af-Pak enterprise.

Two contending perspectives are shaping the Pakistani centrality. At one level there appears to be realisation among the US political and even more importantly military leadership that Gen. Kayani remains their best bet in fighting war on terror and creating conditions for imminent withdrawal; having lost all hope in fractious political leadership to deliver. In that sense Americans appear to have jettisoned the notion of bringing political stability in Pakistan and are working towards leveraging Pakistani military in creating conditions for 'orchestrated withdrawal'. Here Gen. Kayani due to retire soon becomes central to their stabilisation strategy in a cleverly worked out *quid pro quo*.

Capture of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in a joint CIA and ISI operation appears to be part of this arrangement of favour for favour. According to reports in the media capture of Mullah Baradar and capture of Mullah Abdul Salam and Mullah Mir Muhammad, two shadow Taliban governors in northern Afghanistan, in Faisalabad on January 26, who were seen as ISI and Pakistani military Intelligence assets in a Pakistani Army masterminded operation was to convey its sincerity to the Americans. According to Asia Times, these assets were very important to the Pakistani military which they could have used in the future. The fact that they have been pre-emptively compromised indicates to some kind of deal and Pakistani Army's attempt to endear themselves to Americans,

all a part of process of making them critical stakeholder in the reconciliation and reintegration process.

Second perspective of the developments is having assumed a key role of the arbitrator of the Afghan destiny, Pakistan has already started to flex its muscle. Pakistani Army Chief Gen. Kayani, fresh from attending NATO military commanders meeting in Brussels on 27-29 January where he was the sole invitee (Afghan Army Chief in contrast was conspicuous by his absence) in an interview to influential Pakistani

attempt to hijack development of Afghan National Army (ANA) in mould to ensure it never becomes a strategic challenge.

Growing security role of ANA and Afghan National Police and its political context in safeguarding institutional structures now sought to be created in Afghanistan is well recognised by Pakistani military leadership. They are aware as the military strength of ANA grows it will become a powerful player in Afghanistan, hence a pro-Pakistani ANA is seen as an asset. The ground reality however that ANA with bulk

## Future scenarios

Unfortunately these developments have not received the attention they merit, particularly the consequences of these moves. One scenario could be the so called moderate Taliban ruled Afghanistan, sidelining Karzai and other leaders, leading to emergence of Pashtun influence setting the stage for eventual takeover by "Quetta Shura", and emergence of Afghanistan as a theocratic state, backed by Pakistan. In the bargain if they are able to integrate ANA



newspaper *Dawn*, reiterated the Pakistani army's position on Afghanistan: "Pakistan wants a "peaceful, friendly and stable" Afghanistan; strategic depth isn't about "controlling" Afghanistan but about ensuring Pakistan doesn't have a long-term security problem on its western border; India's role in Afghanistan is "unhelpful"; and more importantly Pakistan wants Afghan State institutions, including the army and the police force, to be fashioned in a manner that they don't pose a threat to our (Pakistan's) strategic interests". "He (Gen. Kayani) warned that an environment hostile to Pakistan could strain its battle against militancy and extremism." By implication address our concerns regarding India, or else don't expect us to cooperate as vigorously in the war against militancy.

In yet another statement he offered to train the Afghan army, in its establishments in Pakistan, coming as it is in the backdrop of natural reluctance of Afghan National Army (ANA), for training in Pakistani military training establishments given the poor political relationship points to new found confidence and dare.

These statements clearly highlight an attempt by Pakistan to emerge as the driving force in shaping the political destiny in concert with its long term strategic interests. It also indicates a naked

of its cadres being Tajiks (42 per cent), is emerging as a force representing national mosaic of multi-ethnicity despite demands for greater Pashtun representation. This in a sense is seen by ethnic minorities as a safeguard against Pashtun domination and hijacking by Taliban backed Afghan political structure that could come to govern.

Emergence of multiethnic ANA has been rankling Pakistan and its Taliban supporters who see exclusion of Pashtuns as a deliberate attempt to contain Pashtun dominance in future. Particularly as a well trained and popular ANA will have a substantial say in shaping both security and political discourse. The fact that ANA despite being trained by ISAF has looked for Indian support particularly for training its officer cadre and maintains very cordial and good relations with India is anathema to Pakistani military honchos. It is in above perspective that Gen. Kayani's statement that Afghan army should not become a strategic challenge to Pakistan needs to be seen. The offer to train ANA by Gen. Kayani too is an attempt to prevent India usurping any training role for the ANA either in collusion with Afghan Government or the US, something which the Indian establishment is not comfortable with and post London Conference missed the bus totally.

(reason why Gen. Kayani wants to train the ANA) then it will not only have a State but army as well.

Flip side of above scenario is the possibility of a standoff between predominantly Tajik ANA supported by erstwhile regrouped Northern Alliance cadres and Moderate Taliban attempting to enhance their influence akin to the current developments in Nepal of Maoists' attempt to hijack the democratic discourse. This could result in bloody civil war destabilising not only Afghanistan but the region as well.

Second scenario could be that attempts at integration of moderate Taliban run afoul and this can happen on number of counts which include terms of demobilisation, inadequate inducement or political rehabilitation, leading to upsurge in Taliban violence. Criticality of this will be the ability of ISAF or the US residual forces to intervene; a scenario quite akin to what is happening in Iraq. Failure to do so would mean growing salience of radical forces. That such a scenario will impact Pakistan and its heartland is not fully appreciated by tactical minded Pakistani military leadership.

Third scenario could be gradual integration of not only moderate Taliban but also northern warlords into a stable Afghanistan, this scenario presupposes,

emergence of nationalistic sentiments, weaning away of moderate cadres into nation building processes, good governance and ability of ANA and ANP to maintain peace. A tall order but could come about only in a graduated fashion together with firm commitment of Western coalition to sustain its efforts and not be bound by narrow political mindset.

## Implications for India

As mentioned the first two scenarios have serious implications for India. India will be marginalised in Afghanistan plus face the blow back of creeping Talibanisation and radicalisation; which as the Muzaffrabad conclave highlighted remains a defined Pakistani goal. The developments in Afghanistan if not contained will also impact Pakistan with increasing impetus to Islamic radicalism. In case moderate Taliban integration is not properly managed as highlighted above, will create a strategic vacuum and Taliban victory spurred by defeating sole superpower would become more aggressive.

Such a scenario is unlikely to emerge suddenly but will be a gradual process in fact contours of which have been laid by misperceived and hasty action as a matter of political expediency in London. *India should read the writing on the wall and start shaping its political response.* Some facets of Indian responses could include:

First and foremost India must ensure close and enduring relationship with ANA in all scenarios. This means continue on going collaboration and render all assistance required including training of ANA. An important point is funding of the ANA, eventually the costs of maintaining 200,000 man strong army will become unbearable for the West; it is here India with relatively low costs can be an important partner.

At an appropriate time open dialogue with Taliban leadership particularly those moderate elements that are planned to be inducted as partners in nation building.

Make a political judgment for fostering contacts with Northern Alliance and bordering Central Asian States, to ensure strategic foothold.

In the likely scenario of instability in Afghanistan, China will also be an affected party particularly if Pakistan too is reeling under growing radical onslaught and begins to unravel. It would be prudent to engage China in developing effective post ISAF common strategy.

Iran is emerging an important player with considerable stakes and congruence with India. It is important that dialogue at highest level is initiated to forge regional consensus. India must act in own national interest, in developing strategic relationship with Iran.

With internal situation in Pakistan deteriorating; imperative effective steps to protect the country from backlash of creeping Talibanisation and radical forces are taken within the country. This requires dealing with disruptive forces within, including dialogue with separatists in Jammu and Kashmir to come to a working consensus together with strong measures to keep in check attempts at exploiting communal forces.

At some stage dialogue with Pakistani leadership will become imperative. As indeed it is now being attempted. However it is equally important to engage Pakistani military leadership to make them see futility of policy of confrontation or unjustified concerns of India threat. It is time military is included in these parleys to provide security perspective of the dialogue.

India-US dialogue on developments in Afghanistan and its implications on Indian core strategic interests is becoming vital. India will need to critically spell out its interests and its thresholds unambiguously leaving no scope for misinterpretation.

Last and importantly we need to do a reality check in terms of our Central Asian policy and SCO membership. It is important that India remains engaged with Central Asian States and uses its leverages to shape the discourse particularly energy policy and trade.

## Conclusion

These developments clearly forecast that Western coalition working on their immediate interests has allowed Pakistan to shape the future discourse in a manner that does not augur well for strategic stability in the region and may end up in undermining all that has been achieved in nearly a decade of struggle against terrorism. It is hardly important that whether the policy of divide and rule now being attempted by UK and NATO supported by the US will work, what is important from Indian perspective is that despite having excellent relationship with Afghan Government and undertaking sterling development activities it is increasingly marginalised.

While Pakistan may have gained centrality in bringing about stability in Afghanistan it remains a tall order with large contradictions. India needs to carefully think through future scenarios and start putting in place policies attuned to its long term interests and above all regional stability. India can ill afford to be sidelined and has to act proactively. **DA**

*The writer is Consultant with IPCS and Founder Director Net Assessment, Integrated Defence Staff and former Member National Task Force on Net Assessment and Simulation.*



S.K. Chaturvedi, Chairman & Managing Director

### Preview

POWERGRID, a Navratna Public Sector Enterprise, is one of the largest transmission utilities in the world. POWERGRID wheels about 45 per cent of the total power generated in the country on its transmission network. POWERGRID has a pan India presence with around 74,000 Circuit Kms of Transmission network and 124 EHVAC and HVDC sub-stations with a total transformation capacity of 82,150 MVA. POWERGRID has also diversified into Telecom business and established a telecom network of more than 20,000 Km across the country. POWERGRID has consistently maintained the transmission system availability over 99 per cent which is at par with the International standard.

### Presence in Afghanistan

On the initiative of Afghanistan President His Excellency Mr. Hamid Karzai the project for transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul was accepted by government of India. An Agreement was signed between Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and POWERGRID for construction of 220 kV Kabul- Pul-e-Khumri transmission line and sub-station at Kabul on 12 August 2005. The project was funded by MEA and has been executed by POWERGRID on cost plus basis. The major components of the project:

- 220 kV D/C Pul-e-Khumri - Kabul Line 202 km
- 220 / 110 / 20 kV Sub-station at Kabul
- Construction of township at Kabul
- Training of Personnel of Afghan Electricity Department

*The estimated cost of the Project was INR 478.72 Crore.*

### Project objectives and significance

In view of the acute power shortage in Kabul, this was described as priority number 1 project by the Afghan government. It was also of crucial importance for all realistic development scenarios for the central and northeastern regions of Afghanistan. The undertaking of the construction of the Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul section of the transmission line by POWERGRID had following significance:

- Major infrastructure project in Afghanistan and given its importance, it widens the scope and raises the profile of Indian assistance to Afghanistan as well as serves as a showcase of our expertise and capabilities.
- It enabled Afghanistan to import power from generating stations located in Uzbekistan via Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul to bridge the gap of around 100-200 MW between demand and supply, in quickest possible time.
- Import of power through the transmission line serves as a catalytic agent to speed up the economic rehabilitation and development of Kabul province as well as entire Afghanistan, which will weaken the forces of extremism and fundamentalism.
- It serves to generate further favourable political and public opinion and goodwill for India in Afghanistan.
- It strengthens Indian presence and involvement in the reconstruction process in Afghanistan and enhances India's international profile.

### Challenges overcome

- Landmines galore enroute
- Altitude ranging from 1800 m above sea level at Kabul and more than 4000 m above sea level at Salang range
- Snowbound (1 m to 4 m snow) tough hilly / mountainous terrain
- Temperature as low as minus 30° C
- Avalanches, heavy winds and snowstorms
- Due to hostile weather conditions particularly over Salang range, working possible for only 3-4 months (mid June to mid Sept)
- Transportation of 15,000 MT materials from India to Afghanistan via Bandar Abbas port in Iran and thereafter 2500 km war-torned roads of Afghanistan

### Conclusion

The project was successfully commissioned in May 2009 and handed over to the Afghanistan government for safe and secure power transmission.



Sub-station of Chimtala in Kabul.



There is no gainsaying the fact that Afghanistan has left an indelible stamp on history. Not for nothing has it been described as the "graveyard of dynasties" as one or another of its neighbours have tried to impose their own jurisdiction on the land and its people. This time Sunni Islam, laced with Saudi Wahabism has spawned a cult that threatens to hold sway far beyond what former British commissioner Olof Caroe hinted in his book "The Pathans" when he wrote "political amalgamation, should it ever come, would take a very different shape, Peshawar would absorb Kabul, not Kabul Peshawar..."

# Crucible or cauldron?

Prof. Kalim Bahadur



The strategic location of Afghanistan at the crossroads of central, west, and south Asia has played an important role in the history of the country. In the nineteenth century it was the bone of contention between the British colonial empire and the expanding Czarist Russian empire which came to be called the Great Game. Earlier it was a game between the two great powers but over the centuries many new players have entered the game.[1] Afghanistan and its neighbours are closely bound. Iran and Pakistan are the closest neighbours of Afghanistan and surround it on two sides. In the north of Afghanistan Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan border the country. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are also close by.

from regional power rivalries.[2]

## Durand line

Pakistan is the closest neighbour of Afghanistan and their relations have been volatile ever since the former came into existence in 1947. Afghanistan was a non-aligned country during the cold war but the leftist coup in 1978 changed the situation and the country became a battlefield between the two superpowers. The then military ruler of Pakistan General Ziaul Haq realised that the Soviet Union would have to withdraw from the country which would be a valuable opportunity to jump into the vacuum. A compliant Pakhtun government in Kabul would not

strategic interest in the developments in that country. United States' conflicts with the Islamic regime and the presence of NATO forces in Afghanistan are a potential threat to the security of Iran. It shares a 560-mile (900-km) border with western Afghanistan and has business, religious, familial, and historical ties with the people there.

The Persian-speaking Afghans had hoped that Iran would support Afghanistan in its conflict during the Soviet occupation but they were disappointed as Iran was involved in the decade long war with Saddam-led Iraq. Iran supported Afghan Mujahideen fighting against the Soviet army though problems arose when some Mujahideen groups went on a spree of killing the Shias particularly in the Hazara areas.

## Spillover

The independent tribal Afghan leaders also resented the Iranian influence. Tehran's hostile relations with United States combined with the problems created by two million Afghan refugees living in Iran and the huge drug trade from Afghanistan was a major obstacle for Iran playing any meaningful role in Afghanistan. Iran also had to compete for influence against the United States and the Saudis. Iran and the US cooperated closely to overthrow the Taliban regime. Iran's interests coincided with those of the US in many areas of policy in Afghanistan.

But the United States' strategic interests in Israel and also the nuclear issue with Iran ruled out any cooperation between the two. Close United States-Iran relations would have provided significant additional leverage over Pakistan. The emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 1994 changed the situation for Iran. They were hard line Sunni Wahabi and hostile to Shias. The Mazar-e-Sharif incident was a turning point in 1998 when the Taliban forces killed several Iranian diplomats in the Irani consulate in that city. The Iran government mobilized seventy thousand troops in retaliation.

Iran supported the Bonn Agreement and decided to participate in a big way in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Iran has been one of the major donors for the reconstruction in Afghanistan. Tehran's cooperation with India is very helpful in view of Pakistan's refusal to allow transit of Indian goods to Afghanistan through its territory. On its part Iran was attempting to make its Chabahar port viable by declaring it a free trade zone and improving the logistical infrastructure.

This will facilitate Indian goods to reach Afghanistan. A road or rail line from the port could take Indian goods to the Afghan border. From there, a 217-km India-built road from the Afghan border town of Zaranj will provide the last-mile connectivity to Delaram located on the "garland highway" of Afghanistan which



connects most of its major cities, including Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif and Kunduz. Some of the offshoots of this road, also called the North-South corridor, go into Central Asia. The link would also give Iran an all-weather access into Afghanistan.[4]

## Central Asia

The political developments in Afghanistan have had profound impact on the socio-political situation in the Central Asian States ever since they gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Soon there was competition between Russia and the United States for political influence and military bases. The Central Asian States looked to Moscow for advice and guidance. Afghanistan today shares its borders with Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. A quarter of Afghanistan's population is Tajik. Uzbekistan alone has borders with all the Central Asian States and Afghanistan.[5]

The pressing issues in Central Asian States were the continuing civil war in Afghanistan and the Taliban role in giving sanctuary to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and other militant groups. They had not forgotten the military regime of Gen. Zia encouraging Mujahideen attacks on Central Asian States with the arms supplied by the ISI. Pakistani Islamic groups were promoting Deobandi Wahabi militant groups in the Central Asian States to expand the 'strategic depth' to the north of Afghanistan.[6] The lack of functioning structures in Afghanistan is a cause of great concern for Central Asian States especially three (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan,

Uzbekistan) that share its border. [7]

Kazakhstan does not share its border with Afghanistan. It was the last among the Central Asian Republics to declare itself as independent in 1991. It is the largest of the Central Asian States. Kazakhstan adopted a republican constitution with a Presidential form of government with a multiparty political system. The country declared itself a non-nuclear State. Kazakhstan had allowed the transit of the United States cargo to Afghanistan soon after the outbreak of war in 2001.

## Uzbek interlude

Recently Kazakhstan has reached agreement with NATO for transit of non-lethal goods via Uzbekistan to Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is located in the north of Afghanistan and is one of the double landlocked States in the world. The United States had developed close relations with Uzbekistan to isolate Iran. In the foreign policy of Uzbekistan highest priority goes to relations with neighbouring Central Asian States and Afghanistan. Uzbekistan supported the Tajik regime in Afghanistan led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani, during the civil war in that country. About 2 million Uzbeks lived in Afghanistan and comprised substantial minorities in other Central Asian Republics. The Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostam set up an autonomous Uzbek region in Mazar-e-Sharif in 1992 after Kabul fell to Mujahideen.[8]

It was because of the lack of democracy that Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is increasing its strength in other

**Wars, civil wars, ethnic violence and religious militancy go on around Afghanistan and within it. There are other serious problems. Foremost among them are the expansionist ambitions and mutual fears of Afghanistan's neighbours. The real challenge is how to insulate Afghanistan from regional power rivalries**

Central Asian States. Prominent militant leaders like Juma Namangani and Yuldashev who had links with Osama bin Laden and have been active in Afghanistan helping the Taliban. They had links with the ISI and wanted to create an Islamic State in Uzbekistan.[9] Mullah Omar had appointed Namangani as the head of all Taliban and foreign forces in the north.

## Tajik civil war

Among the five Central Asian States, Tajikistan is the most underdeveloped country. The opposition to the group which was in power when the Soviet Union collapsed was led by the Islamic party called the Islamic Renaissance Party which had been formed during the Soviet times. On the one hand, a civil war broke out in 1992, causing the death of 50,000 persons,



## Foreign interference

The Caucasian States of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are not far away. China in the north-east shares a very tiny border with Afghanistan in the Wakhan panhandle. India in the east and Russia in the north do not share the border but historically had close relations with the country which almost make them its neighbours. All the neighbouring countries have interest in Afghanistan's stability and peace as continued war and conflict leads to refugee exodus and war at home. However, it is a widely held view that if the neighbours of Afghanistan do not support it no war could last long. Wars, civil wars, ethnic violence and religious militancy go on around Afghanistan and within it. There are other serious problems. Foremost among them are the expansionist ambitions and mutual fears of Afghanistan's neighbours. The real challenge is how to insulate Afghanistan

have raised the issue of the Durand line and would give Pakistan a 'strategic depth' in case of a confrontation with India.

The concept of the strategic depth was derided by many strategic analysts but it still remains one of the major objectives of the Pakistan's military in Afghanistan. Army chief General Kayani declared recently that 'we want a strategic depth in Afghanistan but do not want to control it'. He went on to say a peaceful and friendly Afghanistan can provide Pakistan a strategic depth.[3] The United States' invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 decimated the Taliban and their remnants fled into Pakistan. Once the Taliban were defeated the Bonn Conference decided to set up an interim regime and planned for the Loya Jirga for the framing of the constitution.

## Shia affinities

After Pakistan, Iran is the most important neighbour of Afghanistan and has vital

500,000 were displaced and 70,000 left the country to take refuge in Afghanistan. The exit of Mohammed Najibullah from the Afghan political scene in April 1992 raised the morale of the Islamic forces dominated by the Tajik opposition at that time.

The Afghan Tajik government led by Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masood rendered great help to the IRP during the civil war. There were four million Tajiks in Afghanistan, the largest in any Central Asian State. The Tajik opposition continuously received support from Afghanistan. The former Afghan Pashtun Prime Minister, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, trained hundreds of opposition Tajik militants, while the former Afghan Tajik Defence Minister, Ahmad Shah Masood, armed his supporters in Tajikistan's opposition Islamic Renaissance Party.[10] After the civil war in Tajikistan, Iran and Russia jointly decided to support the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan's fight against the Taliban.

Turkmenistan's relations with Afghanistan have been limited in recent decades owing to the former's isolation under the rule of the authoritarian communist Saparmurat Niyazov. Niyazov was the head of the Turkmen Communist Party started in 1985, and he declared himself "President for life" after independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. He died in 2006.

## Turkmen neutrality

Niyazov had pursued a policy of strict neutrality in international affairs. This insulated the Turkmen State from the conflicts and war in neighbouring Afghanistan, and this kept the country safe from the rising Islamic extremism. Niyazov maintained good relations with the Taliban but later he supported the United States invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. His successor President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov has a good relationship with Afghan President Hamid Karzai.[11]

Kyrgyzstan became an independent republic in 1992 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is a democratic republic with a presidential form of political system. Its economy was severely damaged during the political crisis in the nineties. It is one of those States which have no gas or oil resources. Kyrgyzstan has favoured positive relations with its neighbours from the beginning and they wished peace and tranquillity in Afghanistan. Some terrorists infiltrating from Afghanistan, came to southern part of Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000 and the government had to use the military to get rid of them.

## SCO initiative

In line with other Central Asian States Kyrgyzstan had allowed the United States to set up an air base in the country. However, this and other military US bases in the region caused concern in Moscow. In June

2009 Russia offered Kyrgyzstan \$ 2 billion in aid and credit to close the US base. Kyrgyzstan was inclined to agree but after deft negotiation United States offered \$ 180 million to be allowed the continued use of the Manas air base which was accepted.

It was on the initiative of Russia, China and the leaders of four former Soviet Central Asian states that Shanghai Co-operation Organisation was created in 1996. The original 'Shanghai Five' of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have expanded it to include Uzbekistan as a new member. Later Mongolia, India, Iran and Pakistan joined as observers. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation area controls almost 21 per cent of the world's energy resources, the member countries have been victims of the militant movements which threaten these countries. Islamic militants in Chechnya in Russia, and in Xingiang in China, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Hizbul Tehrir, Islamic Renaissance Party, Taliban and other militant terrorist groups have been threatening the member countries. There is also Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda organisation, which provides sanctuary to Arab dissidents from Egypt, Somalia, Algeria, etc. [12]

## Caucasian compliance

The war on terrorism has brought Afghanistan and the Central Asian States into the spotlight of world politics, but the nearby region of the Caucasus between the Black and Caspian Seas, made up of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, is less well known. The three Caucasian States fully supported the United States in the war against terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11. They offered all facilities which they could in the circumstances to the United States and the coalition forces.

They allowed the US and the coalition aircraft free transition over Caucasus air space. They offered blanket overflights and basing rights. Their cooperation was

vital in the war in Afghanistan. Russia does not like the increasing United States involvement in the Caucasus States. The region is sitting on a tinder box. There are tensions and conflicts about Nagorno Karabakh, South Ossetia and between Turkey and Armenia. All the three States although not members of NATO - they are only partner countries - have contributed troops to the alliance fighting in Afghanistan.

Azerbaijan had given permission to the alliance to use two bases and airport to back up its peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan. Lately Azerbaijan has announced its intention to double its forces in Afghanistan. It has not been easy for Georgia to contribute troops for fighting in Afghanistan still it has sent 175 men to join the war. Georgia had withdrawn its troops during the 2008 war with Russia. The president of Georgia Saakashvilli linked his country's participation in Afghanistan war to security at home. Georgian leaders believe that the war in Afghanistan will train Georgian soldiers in future conflicts.

## Russian hegemony

Russia is no longer a neighbour of Afghanistan but it has vital interest in that country. Afghanistan remains strategic prize because of its location near the gas and oil fields of Iran, the Caspian Sea, Central Asia, and Persian Gulf. Russia is concerned if the Alliance leaves before Afghanistan is stabilized as its aftershocks would weaken Moscow's allies in Central Asia. Russia has also doubts about Alliance intentions in Afghanistan. There are concerns that it is building permanent bases in the region.[13] During the reign of the Taliban, Russia became increasingly concerned over Taliban support for Chechen rebels and for providing a sanctuary for terrorist groups active in Central Asia and in Russia itself, and, therefore, provided military assistance to the Northern Alliance. Since the fall



of the Taliban, the Karzai government has improved relations with Russia, but Afghanistan's outstanding foreign debt to Russia still continues to be a source of contention.

## China's interests

China shares with Afghanistan a very small length of border, only 76 Km in the east. The two neighbours did not have interest in each other during the 20th century. Chinese trade with Afghanistan was limited.[14] During the last several years Chinese have shown great interest in the rich gas, oil and mineral resources of Afghanistan. Chinese investments in Afghanistan's copper deposits and also purchase by a consortium of Saudi, Chinese and Indian companies of iron deposits holds promise of creation of jobs for the Afghans. It is even suggested that China could be drawn into making its contribution in the peace process in Afghanistan.

## Israel factor

Afghanistan has not recognized Israel nor does it have relations with that country. There have been occasional reports of private and secret contacts between the Israeli and Afghanistan representatives. Israel of course is keen to establish relations with Afghanistan. Given Afghanistan's close relations with Iran and its hostility with Israel it seems improbable that Kabul would recognize it in the near future. Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai is on record that his government would forge diplomatic relations with Israel if Palestinians could form a State of their own. If the Palestinian government is recognized Kabul will recognize Israel. He had even welcomed the Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza strip. He had also met Simon Peres.

## Indian ties

India's relations with Afghanistan go back to ancient times. The two countries share religious, cultural and economic ties.

Afghanistan opens access for India to the Central Asian and Caucasian States with whom India has cultural and economic relations for the last several centuries. Naturally India is keen to develop trade with these countries particularly in the field of energy. These States could be valuable allies in a region which is facing increasing threat from the militant forces. Close friendly relations with these countries would be helpful to India in the face of hostility by Pakistan.

During the civil war in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the Soviet Army India extended military and other help to the Northern Alliance. After the 9/11 and the Bonn Agreement in 2001 India came forward to help Afghanistan in rehabilitation and reconstruction. Indian aid to Afghanistan amounts to \$ 1.5 billion. New Delhi planned to extend its help to Afghanistan in accordance with the priorities set by the Afghanistan government. It initiated its help immediately after the Bonn Conference by donating \$ 100 million.

Indian projects cover almost all parts of Afghanistan in a wide range of sectors including hydroelectricity, power transmission lines, road construction, agriculture and industry, telecommunications, information and broadcasting, capacity development, humanitarian assistance, education and health which were identified by the Afghan government as priority areas for development. Pakistan has not taken kindly to India's help to the war ravaged Afghanistan as it has not given up its objective of turning it into its strategic depth.

Notes: [1]. Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid; 'From Great Game to Great Bargain'; Foreign Affairs; New York; Volume 87; No. 6; p. 30;

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There is cause to pause and ponder over some events that have not received the attention they deserve in the media. Why is it that knowing full well that the Afghan Shura is operating out of Quetta in the Balochistan province of Pakistan, no Predator has ever visited the place? How is it that out of the blue a very senior commander of the Afghan Taliban should be arrested at Helmand? Are things falling in place or falling apart?

Vishal Chandra

# western alliance: end of the tryst?

The current discourse on Afghan war commonly suggests that the West is on the verge of exiting from Afghanistan. The media in general and a range of analysts in particular have indulged in writing off the prospects of West staying in Afghanistan beyond the next two to three years. The idea of Afghanistan as a 'graveyard of empires' has been over-emphasised as a logical justification for the presumptuous Western retreat from the Af-Pak theatre sooner than latter.

## Going, going...

The London Conference on Afghanistan has been widely interpreted and construed in similar context. In fact, the inevitability of West seeking a quick exit from the region has been emphasised repeatedly since the Obama Administration first came out with a 'new' strategy for the Af-Pak in March 2009. The 'revised' US strategy of December 2009 was widely construed as reinforcing the above idea. Of late the West has been aiming for a greater clarity over its Afghanistan mission both in terms of achievable objectives, the doable(s), and a time frame for its military dis-engagement. What has been notably missing is a serious debate over the consequences of an ill-timed Western retreat and, more so, whether the West would at all be able to withdraw anytime soon from the region.

## Frankensteins

It may be said that it is high time the West began assessing the immediate and long-term implications, as well as the known and unintended consequences, of its withdrawal from Afghanistan beginning mid-2011. Five questions inevitably assume significance: How long the government in Kabul (with or without Hamid Karzai) is likely to survive if the West starts pulling out troops in mid-2011; what would be the implications for the region as well as the West if the US and NATO forces are 'humbled' and 'defeated' on the Afghan soil; how an emboldened anti-West militant Islamist extremism is likely to play out in an increasingly globalised world; who created the Frankenstein monsters in the 1980s and 90s; and has Pakistan, despite continuous Western aid amounting to billions of dollars over the last eight years, stopped nurturing, preserving and using terrorist organisations to leverage its perceived national interest by spreading hatred and mindless violence in Afghanistan, India and regions beyond? If the West fails to face the above issues upfront then its time it realised that there are no honourable exits from the Afghan soil.

The nexus between the Pakistani establishment and the militant terrorist organisations attacking the US and alliance troops inside Afghanistan have time and again been acknowledged by the Western establishments. Does the Pakistan Army need night vision goggles, Predator drones, and F-16s, to take on the multi-national assortment of militant Islamists assiduously nurtured and tutored by it in its tribal areas bordering Afghanistan? Counter-insurgency is never about disproportionate use of weapons of conventional warfare. The Western forces in Afghanistan and the Pakistan Army, both, need to execute the fundamentals of counter-insurgency warfare with more foresight and sensitivity.

Even from the point of national interest, the West needs to boldly think in terms of the implications of an untimely exit, which would be nothing short of being inevitably 'historic' from an intensely destabilised Af-Pak region.

## Pak complicity

Today, the West in general is more obsessed about making a retreat than the implications of losing the Afghanistan war. It is ironical, despite 9/11 and subsequent terror attacks in parts of the world, the West can be so consciously pretentious of the global reach and aspirations of the forces of religious extremism operating out of Pakistan. In the last eight years, one has been accustomed to hearing that the senior Afghan Taliban leadership has been directing the anti-West strategy from within Pakistan. One wonders as to why so far the US drones have missed the supposedly 'known' hideouts of the



**In the last eight years, one has been accustomed to hearing that the senior Afghan Taliban leadership has been directing the anti-West strategy from within Pakistan. One wonders as to why so far the US drones have missed the supposedly 'known' hideouts of the Pakistan-based Afghan Taliban**

Pakistan-based Afghan Taliban.

During the early years of the US-led war on terror, there was a tendency to underestimate or trivialise the potential threat from the Pakistan-based Afghan Taliban and its allies, which today pose a grave challenge for both Kabul and the Western forces in Afghanistan. The US pre-occupation with Iraq war beginning March 2003 primarily led to US actively ignoring the Afghan Taliban recuperating and collating east of the Durand Line.

## Roosting chickens

It was not before 2006-07 that the West began to explicitly acknowledge the transformation of what was hitherto described as 'ragtag' Taliban or the 'remnants' of the former Taliban regime into a force to reckon with. The then military president of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, was busy hoodwinking the West into believing that the Afghan Taliban leadership is based in southern Afghanistan and not inside his country. West's complicity in the resurrection of

the Taliban and Al Qaeda's noted presence in the region needs no explanation and elaboration here.

Today, no wonder, the message for the West from the Af-Pak theatre is unmistakably loud and clear – fight or quit! The Afghan Taliban and their stakeholders in the Pakistani establishment were both ingenious and opportunistic enough to make the best of the US invasion of Iraq and divisions within the alliance.

## Decisive phase

With every passing year, one wonders where Afghanistan is headed. The Obama Administration, as part of its December 2009 revised strategy, announced an additional deployment of 30,000 American troops, over and above 17,000 troops as part of its March 2009 'new' Af-Pak strategy. The collective strength of the Western force level in Afghanistan would thus cross the 100,000 mark this year.

There is no doubt that the Afghan war is peaking, reminiscing of a similar Soviet escalation in the 1980s. The Pakistan-based

'proxied' Afghan Taliban and their allies too are gearing up for the Western escalation. A yet another decisive phase in the three-decade old Afghan conflict is in the making.

For most of America's European allies, the situation in Af-Pak region is simply getting unmanageable. West's growing impatience over the deteriorating situation in the Af-Pak region has been more than evident in recent years.

## Slow withdrawal

Interestingly, any prospects of US and some of its European allies remaining engaged in the region for years to come is neither a subject of debate or speculation in the Western discourse. However, at the same time, there is a growing realisation that withdrawal of Western forces may be a long-drawn affair which may take quite a few years.

It is worth asserting here that the US may drawdown its forces in Afghanistan in the near future but will continue to maintain its presence in the region. It has more to do with the US' long-held geo-political aspirations in the region, and the alliance's search for its relevance in the 21st century.

## Geo-strategy

It is time to provoke a counter-argument to the current discourse on the Afghan war in the Western media. Is the US really thinking in terms of withdrawing from the region lock, stock and barrel? The strategic foothold in the resource-rich Central Asia region, and in close proximity to Russia and China, cannot be simply overlooked in the American strategy. The US is probably trying to shape up the situation in a way that it can stay put in the region

by reinforcing a more competitive and a dedicated carrot-and-stick policy towards both Taliban and Pakistan.

The idea of dispatching additional troops and expanding engagement with Pakistan, while supporting Kabul's reconciliation package during the London Conference, is to bring the perplexing state of affairs in the Af-Pak region to a manageable level, whereby sections of Taliban amenable to the US interests could be part of the government in Kabul.

## Subterfuge

The sudden 'arrest' of some senior Pakistan-based Afghan Taliban elements by the Pakistani forces could be indicative of a newly emerging US-Pakistan strategy for the region, or could be a Pakistani push for a new framework within which the US reconciles to Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan. The subtle shift in the US focus towards the Afghan Taliban while the Al Qaeda stands degraded is to be noted. However, the viability of reconciliation between Kabul and the Afghan Taliban is a lingering issue. Even if both agree on a power-sharing arrangement, the likelihood of its success would ultimately depend on the strength of the Afghan government and extent to which the US is able to influence and transform Pakistan. Otherwise, any short-term approach on the reconciliation issue would undo the achievements of last years and plunge the entire region into a new round of violent power politics.

## Balancing act

As the Afghan conflict and war 'progresses' and enters with all its uncertainties into the fourth decade, history in the region seems to

be unwinding itself. It is not about another superpower of the time on the verge of being 'humbled' on the Afghan soil. It is about Afghanistan re-scripting its role in shaping the regional and world politics as has been the case in the last two centuries.

The Obama administration's March as well as December 2009 Af-Pak strategies appear bold and decisive at one level, and yet flexible and susceptible to the vagaries of the sub-continental politics, at another level. The Obama administration has certainly inherited a much widened and therefore a more challenging conflict theatre. Unlike the Bush Administration, the Obama administration has a more delicate balancing act to do to ensure that its Af-Pak strategy starts showing results on the ground. At the same time, it has to be cognisant of prospects of Af-Pak strategy getting diluted by motivated and calibrated efforts already underway to divert its resources and focus away from the tribal frontiers.

As the anti-Taliban operations intensify, America's Western allies still have a choice. If the US-led effort is defeated, then they may have to return back to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region to confront the next generation of a more ruthless mutant of the Taliban, Al Qaeda and others. **DA**

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Nivedita Das Kundu



convergence  
of international  
**interests**

In the midst of the permutations and combinations of the strategic self-interests of the nations bordering Afghanistan and on the extended frontiers India suddenly finds itself groping for space on the margins. In all the flurry of diplomatic activity one cardinal factor has become submerged – the terrorists are dictating the agenda. The fallaciousness of doing business with the “good Taliban” is staring everyone in the face and it could become the enduring tragedy of the region as a whole that India should be the odd man out.

Afghanistan, located at the crossroads of South and Central Asia sharing its borders with three Central Asian countries on the north and Pakistan and Pak-occupied Kashmir on the south and south-east, occupies a unique geo-strategic position in the region. During the past several years, Afghanistan has remained turbulent posing great challenges to peace and security in the region.

Recently Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has got itself closely involved in Afghanistan. It consists of member States of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, (four Central Asian States) and observer States of India, Pakistan, Mongolia, and Iran. Afghanistan's significance for three Central Asian member-States (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) is immense as they share borders. They share very close historical and cultural ties with the people of Afghanistan. The people of northern Afghanistan are essentially of the same ethnic stock as Central Asian Uzbeks, Tajiks and Turkmen. Thus, the ethnic, social, cultural and political relationships between them are deep-rooted.

### Baleful influence

Consequently the two decades of crisis in Afghanistan had its repercussions on them too. During the Soviet period, Central Asia bore a heavy burden of casualties from the war in Afghanistan. In the more recent years, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan provided bases, training and access to the arms market for the Taliban. The Movement, with Taliban support carried out incursions into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Further, refugees from the Afghan civil war in Tajikistan were influenced by developments in Afghanistan and created disturbances there. Also, much of Afghanistan's drug production flows to Europe through Central Asia. All these factors impelled the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to intervene in Afghanistan.

SCO is a bloc of energy producers, consumers and transit countries, with four nuclear powers. On 27 March 2009, for the first time it hosted a conference on 'Afghanistan' that included representatives from NATO, the US, the European Union and ministers from thirty-six



**As the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation unlike the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation or the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, lacks the identity of a military bloc till date it did not plan for a military involvement in Afghanistan but now it might be amenable to the idea of a co-security partnership with the western bloc**

countries. The summit resulted in 'SCO-Afghanistan Action Plan' that called for closer involvement of the Organisation in Afghanistan and wide collaboration in fighting terrorism and drug trafficking in the region. As mentioned earlier its members and observers surround Afghanistan hence the action plan appears to be a roadmap to eventually draw Afghanistan into the SCO fold.

### Drugs and security

Recently during the London Conference on Afghanistan, which took place on 28 January 2010, the discussion focused on developing regional cooperation with Afghanistan including it as part of the SCO to tackle local illegal drug industry, which is undermining security and is also fuelling terrorist activities in the region. During the conference, the Russian side specifically mentioned that the West, the Shanghai

Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation can join efforts to try to solve Afghan drug trafficking problem, which is becoming a severe concern for Russia's national security. Additionally, Russian side showed its readiness to restore 142 infrastructure

facilities in Afghanistan, earlier built by Soviet specialists.

The discussion in London Conference also focused on developing regional cooperation with SCO and increasing the role of the Central Asian States in stabilizing Afghanistan. As SCO, unlike the NATO or the CSTO, lacks the identity of a military bloc, till date it did not plan for any military involvement in Afghanistan, but now the Organisation might be amenable to the idea of a co-security partnership with the Western military bloc.

### Logistics

It can be envisaged that it will focus its activities mainly on problems of terrorism and narcotic control. It is expected that the Obama administration with its declared desire of "engagement" would be more receptive in coordinating their efforts with the Organisation. Recently, the western bloc signed with Kazakhstan the Afghan supply line deal to allow cargo for international forces in Afghanistan to be shipped through Kazakh territory, opening up a major new supply route into the country.

This would allow supplies for International Security Forces in Afghanistan to start moving from Europe in the coming days. However, the agreement involves only non-lethal supplies. Previously individual Western nations have sent goods through Kazakhstan under bilateral arrangements, but the new deal will allow alliance convoys to move through for the first time.



More than 110,000 European and US-led forces in landlocked Afghanistan are hugely dependent on Pakistan for supplies, with about 80 per cent of cargo and equipment passing through that country. The bulk of equipment is shipped through northwest Pakistan's volatile tribal region of Khyber, where Taliban militants routinely attack convoys. Of late, the West and Russia also have an agreement on the transit of non-lethal supplies across Russian territory by rail for the operations in Afghanistan.

### Russian concerns

The Russians believe that Afghan drug trafficking is the most serious threat to the security of Central Eurasia including Russia. According to official sources Afghan narcotics kill 30,000 people in Russia every year, twice as many as the Soviet Union lost during its decade-long military intervention in Afghanistan. Therefore, the action plan calls for joint SCO-Afghan operations in combating drug trafficking and organized crime, including training of drug agencies, combating laundering of drug money and improving border controls.

Russia has approved rail transit of non-military supplies to Afghanistan, and suggested that this could include military cargo as well, though such approval is surely conditional on US actions affecting Russia, primarily its plans for missile bases in Eastern Europe. Also there is belief that through cooperation with the Organisation the US and the rest of the Western alliance can have acceptable format to bring Iran into the dialogue.

### Realignments

It seems US-Russia policy in the Eurasian region is bound to be reset, but needs to see whether it is going to be more of a confrontation or cooperation! Russia and the United States will continue to debate over the post-Soviet space. Russia which is seeking to find a new place in

the global architecture has followed an increasingly assertive foreign policy towards Commonwealth of Independent States. Russia's new foreign policy principles were intended to send clear signals to multiple audiences and the message to the world was that Eurasia which mainly consists of former Soviet states is a "zone of influence" for Russia. Though Russia and the US can benefit if they work together in Afghanistan to address their national interests, however, the question will remain that will they be involved in a zero-sum game, a win-lose game, or a win-win game?

Regional countries have greater stakes in Afghanistan because of their vested security interests. The current situation in Afghanistan is worrisome for India too. Under the SCO mechanism India remains an observer State, hence, New Delhi has shown its willingness to work together with the Organisation in Afghanistan but doesn't wield the same influence as Russia or China.

Nonetheless, in the London Conference, many participants have shown their dissatisfaction over India's position on Afghanistan. It seems India's influence on the international community in regard to Afghanistan over the last decade or so has become marginal. This was very much evident when India was not consulted by the US when it devised its Af-Pak policy. More worrisome fact was that Turkey did not even invite India to the Istanbul Regional Conference on Afghanistan.

### Contradictions galore

However, there is a need to examine closely the NATO-SCO relations which will determine the future developments of the geopolitical situation in the region.

It is very clear that the West and the Organisation have urgent common interests in promoting long-term stability in Afghanistan. These include containing and defeating "radical extremist" forces, reversing the noxious effects of the opium

trade from that country and preventing instability in Afghanistan from impacting on the extended region. These shared interests might bring cooperation between Russia and US closer to each other.

In Eurasia, US-Russia policy might differ though the West and the Organisation agree on Afghanistan but differ on Georgian issue. Though the West and the SCO agreed on the need to step up cooperation against militants in Afghanistan they failed to set a timetable for normalizing the strained relations due to the Russia-Georgia war. Afghanistan is one area where the Western military bloc and Russia see eye-to-eye on the importance of cooperation and it seemed it will deepen further. As mentioned above, the two sides have already made an agreement on land transportation of non-lethal goods for the West-led Afghan operations, it is expected that the next step could be to broaden this to air transportation.

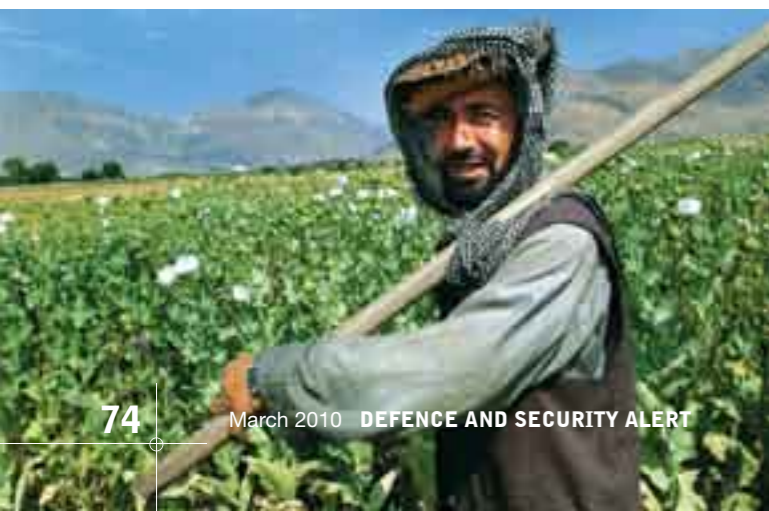
Nonetheless, it is to be noted that the decision by Kyrgyzstan to announce plans to close a base used by US forces and some Western allies to supply forces in Afghanistan came as a surprise for the US. There was shared view that cooperation on Afghanistan should be stepped up both politically and if possible militarily too, but this does not mean sending troops from SCO States to Afghanistan immediately.

### Helpful trends

The Organisation along with the Western military bloc have already achieved a great deal together in the joint work on counter-narcotics training. They have advanced the professional skills of almost 1000 counter-narcotics officers from Afghanistan and Central Asia. This was a good start and gave it the confidence to go much further, by examining, for example, how drugs money and organized crime in general are fuelling international terrorism. There is, thus, a lot that both the West and the Organisation could do together to make the region more secure.

In "Russian Security Strategy till 2020," it has been mentioned that it seems Russia-SCO very much like US-NATO, is grappling with the new and rapidly evolving security environment that has thrown up new challenges. But it also offers an ideal opportunity for enhancing cooperation between US and Russia. The Western military bloc is now resetting a new strategic concept addressing emerging threats of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and energy security; however, it needs to also factor in the Sino-Russian-led Organisation as an increasingly prominent stakeholder in Afghanistan. Hence, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation activities in Afghanistan will have significant impact on US-Russia policy in the region. 🇷🇺 🇺🇸

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# MILAN 2010: Naval Cooperation for Humanitarian Assistance

Rohit Srivastava

Navies have distinct responsibility of carrying out diplomatic relations with other nations. Milan 2010 was an effort to develop interoperability between Asian nations for common maritime interest and challenges.

India is one of the fastest growing economies of the world. With this her stature in the international sphere is growing rapidly. It is expected of India to take on the leadership role against the common challenges faced by the international community.

Indian Ocean region has one of the largest sea traffic in the world, with large volume of trade and rapidly rising economies solely dependent on sea line of communications running through Indian Ocean.

Milan is a biennial event where navies from Asia Pacific littoral States conduct training and discussion on common maritime challenges hosted by Andaman and Nicobar Command at Port Blair. Its seventh edition held between 3-8 February 2010, saw participation from twelve navies of Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand with one ship each, Singapore with two ships, Brunei, New Zealand and Vietnam had high level delegations for various activities. In its first edition Milan saw participation from four countries namely Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia in 1995. A threefold increase in participants in just seven editions is proof of India's growing stature in Asia Pacific region.

Indian Navy and Coast Guard both participated in this five day exercise to develop understanding of operational procedures and enhancing interoperability between navies operating in the region.

Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Foreign Cooperation and Intelligence), Rear Admiral Sudharshan Shrikhande, speaking to the reporters on Milan 2010 said, "The amount of patrolling required for preventing the 26/11 type of attacks in other countries too is the same as in India. So, these issues will be discussed".

Co-operative action of navies in delivering Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) was the theme for this edition, keeping in line with the natural disasters like tsunami and cyclone requiring heavy assistance from neighbouring States. India has played significant role in this area in the past.

International seminar on Navies in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief held on 5 February inaugurated by the Lieutenant Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Bhopinder Singh, and attended by Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Nirmal Verma, focused on need for littoral navies to cooperate in providing relief in disasters. Delivering inaugural address Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Singh pointed out the increase in natural disasters in the Asia Pacific region and the requisition for littoral State's cooperation in providing effective and timely assistance is need of the hour.

Admiral Verma, in his keynote address said, "No one country can deal with such disasters alone and therefore there is a criticality for co-operation and collaboration in effecting HADR". Speaking further he said there is need for navies to come together at planning and organising stages. The seminar saw ten papers being presented by representatives from different navies, sharing their experiences of tsunami and cyclone relief work.

Navies also participated in wargaming and high sea operation drills and exercises.

Terror by non-State actors, gun-running, drug-smuggling, poaching in the exclusive economic zones and illegal migrants are common troubles that the nations in the region are facing. Littoral States are coming together to work jointly, learning from each other's experience and expertise.

India is currently holding bi-annual joint patrols with the Indonesian and Malaysian navies along the international maritime border. India might hold such patrols or operations with regional navies in the Indian Ocean region in future.

Indian navy deserves to be commended for the excellent effort in developing naval relations with extended maritime neighbourhood. It is an endeavour befitting the rising profile of India as an ascending global power and leadership role expected of her in the region.



# DEFEXPO 2010



Recently concluded DEFEXPO, largest in all its editions, most attended and covered, was befitting to the world's largest defence equipment importer. Enthusiasm and bonhomie shown by the defence manufacturers from across the globe to India and nascent Indian defence industry is testimony of their desire to play long innings here. A win-win situation for all. The big news that India's projected arms spend over the next 10 years is going to be to the tune of USD 100 billion is already buzzing. Now time will tell how well India plays its cards.

New Delhi: Sixth edition of the DEFEXPO India, Land and Naval Systems Exposition, organised biennially by Ministry of Defence since 1999, was organized from 15 – 18 February, 2010. The event saw 40 per cent rise in participants, from 447 exhibitors in 2008 to 650 exhibitors in its 6th edition this year. Growth which suggests rising market profile of India and potential for export from India to other nations. In the year 2008 there were 447 exhibitors from 29 countries. The exhibition area almost doubled from 17200 sq meters in 2008 to 30100 sq meters this year.

The essentiality of the geopolitical capital for defence deal could be easily made out from the number of delegations from across the globe. The exposition witnessed 38 official delegations, including 14 ministerial delegations attending in four days.

Rapid modernisation of weapons obsoletes a weapon very soon, a big challenge for any country especially a developing nation like India. The country is spending around 2.5 per cent of its GDP at present, expenditure on defence is expected to grow in proportion to Indian economy, which is growing at 8-10 per cent, hopefully for next two decades.

DEFEXPO India 2010 was an effort to showcase India's capabilities in land and naval systems. To demonstrate India's ability to design, develop and

operationalise large array of military and civil products, with technical and economic competitiveness, for global market.

The expo saw large number of small and medium enterprises, with products required by our Army, Navy and Paramilitary forces. These include bulletproof body armours, sensors and body armours for policing and special operations. Indian auto companies displayed up-armouring capability, brought forward vehicles with

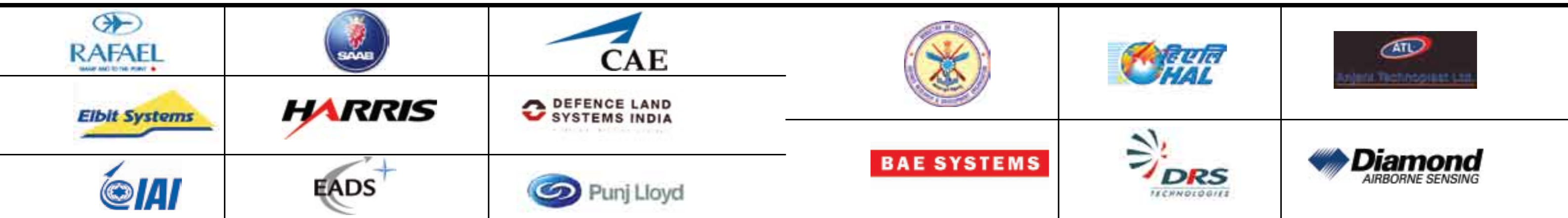
bulletproofing for troops' transportation. Anti-mines vehicles were also displayed by Indian firms which till now were imported for defence forces.

Many small firms also brought out micro and mini UAV's in very exciting range and prices. This is an area which has huge global market. Indian firms with excellent expertise in electronics and IT have developed simulators for every possible training purpose be it artillery, tank, shoulder fired missiles, mortars and missiles. Till now India has been importing simulators, but the way IT expertise has been utilized by smaller firms to cater to forces, special requirement is commendable.

The high point of expo was the joint ventures between Indian and foreign companies to exploit Offset and "make Indian" clause in DPP 2009. Since introduction of Defence Offset Policy, contracts worth Rs. 8,000 crore have been signed till now. Realisation of benefits from Offset and Offset Banking will allow the Indian industry to start Offsets even before finalising of contracts with foreign OEMs.

There are 41 Offset contracts worth more than Rs. 49,000 crore in the pipeline at various stages of negotiations which are going to materialise in the next couple of years. 31 private Indian firms have signed Offset contracts worth Rs. 8200 crore, apart from the OFB / DPSUs till now.

Defence Ministers from UK, Bulgaria, Hungary, Nigeria, Turkey, Uganda, Senegal and Suriname along with Official delegations from 41 countries participated in the exhibition. Naval Chiefs from Kazakhstan, Mozambique, Brunei, Qatar and Senegal and Army Chief from Mongolia also attended the exhibition





**Major events**

BEML Ltd., one of the biggest original equipment manufacturers of defence land systems in India, signed a MoU with Messrs OBRUM, a leading research and development, modernisation and production enterprise of Poland during DEFEXPO. The MoU envisages joint designing and development of various products such as Armoured Recovery and Repair Vehicle on ARJUN, Futuristic Main Battle Tank, Overhaul of T-72 and BMP-II, APU for T-72 and APU+A/C Unit for T-90, Armoured Personnel Carrier, 155 mm SP tracked gun system, T-72 1000 hp engine and BMP-II upgrade. The Project for development of Armoured Recovery and Repaired Vehicle on ARJUN is promoted and co-ordinated by CVRDE, Chennai and is funded by DRDO. BEML will also invest in the project and it is anticipated that BEML will be the nodal agency for production and supply of the ARRVs. Tata Industrial Services and Diehl BGT Defence GmbH & Co. KG signed an MoU for Industrial Cooperation and Offset support in Defence and Security.

This will enable both companies to engage and explore opportunities for Global supply solutions from India, involving various non-Tata and Tata group companies. This MoU will also allow Diehl BGT Defence to bring in relevant technology and products into India for cooperation with Indian Partners to participate in key domestic programmes.

Tata made another big ticket deal with

signing a Shareholders' Agreement for the formation of an Indian joint venture company which will establish in India a final assembly line for the AW119 helicopter for the worldwide market. The agreement was signed in New Delhi by Mr. Giuseppe Orsi, CEO, AgustaWestland and Mr. Ratan Tata, Chairman, Tata Sons. The joint venture company will be responsible for AW119 final assembly, completion and delivery while AgustaWestland will retain responsibility for worldwide marketing and sales. The first aircraft is scheduled to be delivered from the new facility in 2011 with production forecast to rise to 30 aircraft per year to meet worldwide demand.

This joint venture will be supplier for the Reconnaissance and Surveillance Helicopter (RSH) programme of the Indian Armed Forces, where AgustaWestland is a contender with AW119 to be manufactured in India.

Indian defence major, Larsen & Toubro Limited (L&T) and global major Raytheon Company, announced joining hands to upgrade Indian Army T-72 tanks.

As per the proposal, Raytheon will provide Infrared Imaging Sights (IIS) and Electronics, to improve target accuracy and increase overall system lethality on the battlefield for T-72 tank battalions. Larsen & Toubro will provide fire control system, sensor and will accomplish the final integration along with the customer support.

"L&T is the only Indian company in the private sector that is leading the

tank upgrade programme. L&T and Raytheon combination has got what it takes to deliver on such an important programme," said M.V. Kotwal, Senior Executive Vice President and Member of the Board, L&T. "This beginning would lead to new avenues in Indian and global defence markets for both the partners working together."

The 6th International Exhibition on Land and Naval Defence systems DEFEXPO 2010 was a tremendous success. Over 1,26,000 visitors including 85,000 business visitors came to the exhibition. The four-day event was the largest ever Defence Exposition in Asia and showcased India's emergence as an attractive destination for investment in the defence sector and provided a platform for alliances and joint ventures in defence industry. Over 650 companies from about 35 countries displayed weapon systems for Army and Navy. Israel was the biggest participating country in terms of space occupied (1248 sq meters) while the United States was represented with the maximum number of 25 companies.

The momentum generated this year is surely going to continue and the government's plan to procure about 70 per cent of its requirement in defence from Indian sources by end of this decade, looks very realistic, with Indian and global firms coming together to manufacture weapons and systems required by India. **D A**



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**Journey so far...**





# Afghan Chronicle

Based on true life-story and observations of an Indian who lived in Afghanistan for 37 years, sharing his experiences with DSA correspondent Rohit Srivastava for this Afghanistan special.

History of a nation is its people's creation. A vibrant society takes charge of its destiny, shapes its future, stands against the odds and produces leaders with vision and charisma. In favourable times it extends its influence far and wide, creating a buffer for abating any danger from outside beyond its borders. Something Afghanistan has never been able to do till now. Something which they must do, but, which will require sense of belonging to the nation of Afghanistan, above tribal or religious allegiance.

Afghanistan is creation of agreements between leading powers in early twentieth century. Graveyard of empires, a name more of a misnomer, a country which has always been razed by armies marching towards India from Central Asia, had no option but to fight. Today's Afghanistan has always been ruled by some empire from neighbourhood be it Mauryan, Guptan during ancient times from India, by Mongols from Central Asia and Persian Empire during Medieval pre-Mughal era.

a continuous slide since its Glory Days of Gandhar and Taxila to Taliban. Can we call today's Afghanistan a country in true sense? A nation whose population does not respect its central authority, ready to play in the hands of any stooges planted from abroad, ready to wield gun and kill fellow countrymen without having any solid reason, on dictates from tribal heads. A nation with these characteristics is sure to head for doom.

Since 2002 around \$ 40 billion has been invested by international community. The nation now has much improved infrastructure and quality of life, but is there any sense of gratitude or desire to maintain and improve from the people? Soviets during Najibullah's time invested heavily in infrastructure and governance but the civil war which followed the Soviet exit destroyed most of the infrastructure built in last two decades. The warriors didn't even spare the hospitals and schools, which explicitly suggests the importance the society gives to these things.

other items imported from Russia were highly subsidised, a tin of fish would cost one afghani, whereas the price for the same in Russia was much higher. Russians brought with them prefabricated houses to provide good and quick housing facilities to the Afghans, for the first time Kabul had running water. The educated class enjoyed a very relaxed and trouble free life which an Afghan today can't even imagine. People would go for picnics outside Kabul and Kandahar on the Thursday afternoon to be back on Friday evening. Major tourist attractions used to be Bamiyan and Panjsher valley. Strangely these places today are notorious for most inhuman and barbaric acts. Destruction of Bamiyan Buddha by Taliban was an act to erase Afghanistan's secular, tolerant history.

Political rivalry between Daud and Hafizullah Amin brought this peaceful place into a political whirlpool which was exploited by ISI through students of Kabul University with Islamist political leanings. An easy political ideology, Islamism, which



Babar's conquest put them for almost 200 years under Mughals which then kept shifting between Sikhs and Persians. For a brief time during Durrani's rule, Afghans also ruled Afghanistan.

The country since then has been a geopolitical fault line. USSR and British Empire kept present day Afghanistan as Buffer State, without much interference. Durand Line was marked without much consideration between British Empire and Afghan Amir, after Anglo-Afghan war. But the Durand line could never become a strict border. Incapability of the society and leadership to dictate terms at the time of Partition of India, the land of Pashtuns got divided between Pakistan and Afghanistan, a State with no socio-political structure. Since then it has been a nation which neither had a future nor any cohesion with the past.

Today Afghanistan is one of the most backward nations with an enviable history,

Zahir Shah the last king of Afghanistan didn't have total control over Afghanistan like today's President yet he had the allegiance of all tribal and local chiefs. Thus a loose yet significant bonding was there to hold the nation together. During that time all privileges of the society were enjoyed by the Feudal class. There was hardly any educated professional middle class in the society. Yet the society was stable, happy and well fed with enough to live a decent living. Afghanistan, a land full of fruits and nuts, exports of which spun number of fascinating tales in the folklore of India.

There was a marked improvement in major towns and cities when Soviets started supporting Afghanistan. Kabul airport was built by them, roads, bridges, schools and hospitals came up. Although the interiors were still the same but at least in cities like Kabul, Kandahar, Jalalabad etc. infrastructure improved remarkably.

During Russian time the canned food and

The Afghan civil society will have to decide whether they want development or they want to be ruled by crooks who believe in medieval morals funded by Switzerland holidayers and champagne drinkers from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. If Afghans are not responsible then what responsibility others have towards Afghanistan?

Zahir Shah the last king of Afghanistan didn't have total control over Afghanistan like today's President yet he had the allegiance of all tribal and local chiefs. Thus a loose yet significant bonding was there to hold the nation together. During that time all privileges of the society were enjoyed by the Feudal class. There was hardly any educated professional middle class in the society. Yet the society was stable, happy and well fed with enough to live a decent living



reforms, modern societal values which could have brought them down. Today Afghanistan is known for extreme form of Islam, which is intolerant to other versions of Islam, but till late 80s Kabul saw Ashura processions during month of Moharram. This tradition discontinued during civil war and Taliban banned every religious tradition which was not acceptable to them. King Zahir Shah had representatives of Sikhs and Hindus in his Durbar.

Afghanistan has been built by outsiders twice. Once by Russians and now by international community, but what both efforts could not achieve is developing a sense of responsibility among Afghani people. Investment in human resource development could only be utilized if the Afghan society stands up to defend itself from present onslaught from abroad. The Afghan civil society will have to decide whether they want development or they want to be ruled by crooks who believe in medieval morals funded by Switzerland holidayers and champagne drinkers from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. If Afghans are not responsible then what responsibility others have towards Afghanistan?

It's time we let Afghanistan fight its own war, decide for itself what it wants, where it wants to reach in future? Every life that is lost defending Afghanistan owes something to the world and Afghans in particular. If Islamic world ignores Afghans' exploitation by fellow Muslim nations then they also need to be quizzed and held responsible. Islamic world has played victimhood politics very well and for long but has inflicted huge damage to fellow Muslims only. Afghanistan is unfortunate victim of theocratic machinations and geopolitical intrigue.

History will not be generous to Afghanistan if its people don't take charge of their destiny. **DA**

since then has only given way to more stringent and regressively pathological ideology. Kabul University till early 80s used to be an excellent university, churning out graduates who would go to best Universities of the world. But like all the nice things of Afghanistan even quality education was available to the privileged class, the same class which abandoned the nation during years of turmoil. Had this class not run away and tried to put a resistance to find a solution, Afghanistan would have been a different place.

The privileged class in every backward society never put a fight against any problem as they don't find it worth fighting for the downtrodden people. Afghan elite rushed to western countries to lap the easy refugee status to live a secured life. In the chaos that

gripped the whole of Afghanistan villagers moved towards Pakistan to refugee camps. These camps then became the breeding ground of mujahideen who were exploited to fight the Russians.

Warlords were created out of leading tribal families or people who had leadership quality in these camps by ISI, which needed people from every community and every region of Afghanistan to fight the Russians, a cycle of violence and migration which till now has not abated. Political opponents have never been treated with respect and tolerated. One of the major reasons for the unrest when Daud and Babrak Karmal resorted to crackdown on their political opponents.

Russian arrival was not opposed by ordinary Afghans but by elite who were worried about communist rule, land

Visiting Afghanistan for the second time, a war correspondent noted that since the fall of the Taliban, wives who used to walk ten paces behind their husbands were now walking ten paces in front. The journalist asked one of the men if this was a sign of growing equality. "No", the man replied, "Land-mines".



Little David comes home from first grade and tells his father that they learned about the history of Valentine's Day. "Since Valentine's Day is for a Christian saint and we're Jewish," he asks, "will God get mad at me for giving someone a valentine?"

David's father thinks a bit, then says "No, I don't think God would get mad. Who do you want to give a valentine to?"

"Osama bin Laden," David says.

"Why Osama bin Laden," his father asks in shock.

"Well," David says, "I thought that if a little American Jewish boy could have enough love to give Osama a valentine, he might start to think that maybe we're not all bad, and maybe start loving people a little bit. And if other kids saw what I did and sent valentines to Osama, he'd love everyone a lot. And then he'd start going all over the place to tell everyone how much he loved them and how he didn't hate anyone anymore."

His father's heart swells and he looks at his boy with newfound pride.

"David, that's the most wonderful thing I've ever heard."

"I know," David says, "and once that gets him out in the open, the Marines shoot him."

Osama bin Laden goes to a psychic who says "You will die on an American holiday". Needless to say bin Laden is shocked.

"Which one?" he asks.

"Doesn't matter", says the psychic. "Whatever day you die will become an American holiday."

If the Taliban Won the War... the Statue of Liberty might become...



# DEFENCE AND SECURITY



## Maoists kill 24 security personnel in West Bengal

On 15th February Eastern Frontier Rifles (EFR), lost at least 24 of its personnel in attack on EFR camp at Sildha in West Midnapore District in West Bengal by Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist) cadres. The attack was claimed by Maoists politburo member Koteswar Rao alias Kishan ji. The Maoists first attacked the camp with bombs, then indiscriminate firing on unsuspecting personnel. Maoists took away arms of security forces with them. They planted landmines on roads to prevent any quick chase from security forces.

## Maoists kill innocent villagers in Bihar



In an incidence of revenge killing Maoists attacked Phulwaria village in Jamui District on 17 February costing 12 lives. It is being suspected that the village was not sympathetic towards Maoists and villagers were involved in spying for police. Around 150 armed Maoists attacked unarmed villagers at night. Police suspects the incident could be related to the killing of Maoists in the past.

## Bomb blast in Pune, 9 killed, 60 injured

After a lull of 14 months terror again struck India, killing nine people in the German Bakery in Koregaon Park in Pune at 7.30 pm (IST) on February 13, including two foreigners. The bomb was kept in a bag under the table. Incidentally the bakery is located near the Jewish Chabad House. Investigation suggests use of RDX through IED.

The Bakery was also very close to the Osho Ashram, which was visited by Lashkar-e-Toeba (LeT) operative David Coleman Headley. Abdur Rehman Makki, the 'deputy' to the Jama'at-ud-Da'awa's (JuD) warned that Pune could be a target on February 5 in Islamabad in Pakistan.



The responsibility of the attack was taken by an unknown Pakistan-based terrorist outfit Lashkar-e-Toeba al-Almi, through an operative named Abu Jindal. India's "refusal" to discuss Kashmir with Pakistan was the reason behind the bombing claimed by him in his message to media. Indian Mujahideen Kashmir also claimed the responsibility. Al-Qaeda affiliated Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) 'commander' Muhammad Ilyas Kashmiri was reported to have sent an e-mail to a Pakistani journalist, claiming responsibility for the attack. So many claimants for one attack suggest diversionary tactics by the terror groups to avoid any direct blame.

## KLNLFF puts down arms

The Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front in a public ceremony laid down arms on February 11, at Kasa stadium in the Diphu area of Karbi Anglong. Hage Khaathar, group's acting 'chairman', with his top leaders including 'commander-in-chief' Songja Timong and 'general secretary' Thong Teron, with 416 cadres. This is considered a very significant development as the insurgent groups are coming forward to lay down arms. Arrest of many top leaders from ULFA is turning the tide in favour of peace.

## Groups across the border ready to perpetrate terrorist acts: Prime Minister

Inaugurating the Chief Ministers' Conference on Internal Security in New Delhi on February 7, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, said, terrorists from across the border are ready to "perpetrate terrorist acts in our country and Jammu and Kashmir bears the brunt of the acts of these groups".

There has been decline in the number of terrorist incidents from 2008 to 2009 in Jammu and Kashmir. He expressed his concern at the increase in the number of infiltration bids. North east and Left-Wing Extremism are other major threats to nation, he further added.

Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram, called Pakistan-based terrorist outfits, "dark forces," which were "implacably" opposed to India. "Their weapons are mayhem and violence, and their goal is forcible annexation of Kashmir. Let me make it clear that these dark forces will not succeed in their designs," he further said.

## BSF to add another 29 battalions

Centre has approved additional 29 battalions, around 29,000 personnel in coming years. Border Security Force (BSF) is premier border guarding force manning borders with Bangladesh and Pakistan with additional internal security responsibilities.

Indo-Bangladesh border would get around 16 battalions to man



riverine areas, rest will be to provide rest and recuperation to fatigued battalions. The force needs reserve battalions to decrease fatigue and improve efficiency. Minister of State for Home Mr. Ajay Maken, speaking at the Passing-Out-Parade of a fresh batch of 129 BSF officers at Tekanpur in Madhya Pradesh, on February 20. Two battalions have been raised last year and seven are expected during 2010-2011.

To cater for additional administrative requirement, three frontier headquarters and seven sector headquarters will come up, Mr. Maken added.

## Indian Navy's Fleet Tanker launched in Italy

The first of the two Fleet Tankers (Yard 6186) for the Indian Navy was launched at a colourful ceremony at Muggiano, Italy being built at M/s Fincantieri Shipyards. The ship has been constructed using modern and state-of-the-art ship construction methods and concepts with double hull configuration, which provides greater safety against accidental oil spillage in accordance with latest MARPOL regulations. The trials of the ship will start in April 2010 and delivery of the ship and commissioning is scheduled in India in the later part of 2010. The second Fleet Tanker is under construction at the Fincantieri Yard of Sestri Ponente, Genoa, and is scheduled for delivery in 2011. The ship, christened 'Deepak' was launched by Mrs. Farida Khan, wife of His Excellency Shri Arif S. Khan, the Indian Ambassador in Rome, who was the Chief Guest.

## Be globally competitive: Antony to DRDO

"We want the private sector to play a more prominent role in the defence sector. We are revising the Defence Procurement Policy. Our aim is to motivate private companies to invest more financial and human resources in R&D", speaking on the three day DRDO Directors' Conference, in Delhi, Defence Minister Mr. A.K. Antony said.

Speaking further Antony said, "With increasing participation of foreign companies and the private sector, organisations like DRDO are left with no choice, but to be globally competitive".

DRDO has had tremendous growth in 50 years and its achievements span the fields of missile development, electronics, tactical weapons and the development of critical defence technologies for our Armed Forces. DRDO has also played a key role in the launch of *INS Arihant*, India's first nuclear powered submarine. The successful test of the Interceptor missile in endo and exo atmospheric roles has enhanced India's capability in Ballistic Missile Defence Capability. The development of indigenous surface to air missile systems *Akash* and its offshoots of Weapon Locating Radar and 3D surveillance radar will boost our defence preparedness. Recently, DRDO has also handed over 45 MBTs and six stations of '*Divya Drishti*' to our Armed Forces.

"If DRDO is to meet its mandate of providing the world's best equipment to our Armed Forces. DRDO will have to become a forward-looking and a receptive organisation and not remain rooted to old mindsets", he pointed out.

## NAVY INDUCTS MiG-29K

The 19th day of February 2010, was marked with the take off-of the Indian Navy's new fighter aircraft - the MiG-29K with its full afterburners. The new fighter displayed its agility by breaking into an almost vertical climb within seconds after take-off. The grand ceremony to formally induct MiG-29K 'Air Dominance Fighter' aircraft, into the Indian Navy, was held at *INS Hansa*, Vasco da Gama, Goa.

"With today's induction of the MiG-29K, coupled with future inductions of aircraft carriers our navy's capability will see a quantum jump", Hon'ble Defence Minister Mr. A.K. Antony, the Chief Guest for the ceremony, said in his inaugural address. He stated that such an addition to our inventory was in fact overdue as the operational role of the Indian Navy has increased manifold.

The new MiG-29K belongs to the 4+ generation and is capable of fulfilling multiple roles. The new aircraft is more than 30 per cent heavier than the MiG-29B (IAF). The MiG-29K will be equipped with anti-aircraft Beyond Visual Range Missiles, guided Anti-Ship Missiles, 'smart' guided-bombs and rockets. Computers proliferate all the systems on board the MiG-29K, including weapon systems, navigation systems, instrumentation, flight controls and safety systems. The pilot's helmet is equipped with advanced features permitting the pilot to shoot a target by merely looking at it. With all these systems, the MiG-29K is indeed a fighter to reckon with and is arguably one of the best in the sub-continent today.

The Indian Navy has decided to go ahead with its expansion plans at the Dabolim airport. Preparations are underway to build a Shore Based Test Facility (SBTF) which will be used by its Light Combat Aircrafts (LCAs) and MiG-29K fighter jets. Commanding Officer (CO) of the *INS Hansa*, Captain Surendra Ahuja, said that the SBTF in India will be only the second of its kind in the world, with Russia being the only other country to have this facility.

Since the MiG-29K's flight operation on the aircraft carrier will be in the Short Take Off But Arrested Landing (STOBLAR) configuration, two wire arresting systems are also being set up at the *INS Hansa* naval base.

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## Errata: *DSA* FEBRUARY 2010

1. Page 16. "Bangladesh offensive" map: 12 CORPS should read 2 CORPS.
  2. Page 28. Middle column "Theatre Commands" last para 8th line Chief of Air Staff should read Chief of Army Staff.
- The errors are regretted. - [Team DSA](#)

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Please refer to your letter dated 03 Oct 2009, addressed to the COAS. The Chief of the Army Staff has conveyed his thanks for sending him a copy of Defence And Security Alert (DSA) magazine, which he perused with interest.

**Col. Mandip Singh,  
Dy MA to COAS, New Delhi**

Thank you for having sent me a copy of the inaugural issue of the Defence & Security Alert magazine. I have perused the same with great pleasure and interest and I take this opportunity to compliment you and the rest of the staff of DSA for having brought out a truly world-class magazine. The articles are well researched, well written, topical and thought provoking. What is more is that they have been written by known experts in their respective fields which gives stature to your magazine. I have no doubt that your magazine will become a leading one in the Defence Field in the times to come.

**Lt. Gen. (Retd.) V. K. Jetly  
Gurgaon**

Awareness levels involving the security of the country are extremely limited in India particularly among those who are at the helm of decision making. The country of our size and growing importance has to correct this anomaly. I think your magazine will contribute substantially and meaningfully towards that end in the months and years to come.

**Lt. Gen. (Retd.)  
Shantonu Chowdhry  
Noida**

I am pleased to receive a copy of the inaugural as well as the second issue of your journal 'Defence And security Alert (DSA). I found the contents very relevant and interesting. I am sure that informative articles of your journal would be of value to the set of professional magazines that are often referred to by Service officers.

I have recommended the inclusion of the magazine for our reference libraries to our Directorate of Naval Education.

Wishing your journal the very best in the years ahead.

**Admiral Nirmal Verma,  
PVSM, AVSM, ADC,  
Chief of the Naval Staff,  
New Delhi**

**A B O U T**  
**DSA**

I have seen two issues of the Defence And Security Alert. I have been very impressed both with the themes of these issues and the quality of articles which reflect knowledge as well as balance - qualities not generally visible in many such journals which are now flooding the market. A journal on defence strategy and security has credibility only if its contents carry conviction and are related to facts and these stand out, at least in the first two issues of the DSA. I hope this will be a continuing feature of your journal. With all good wishes.

**Vice Adm. (Retd.) Premvir Das,  
Noida**

Thank you for sending me a copy of your magazine. I found the issue very informative and useful. I particularly liked its contents, presentation and attractive looks. My best wishes to all of you. May you continue to do the good work.

**Air Chief Marshal (Retd.)  
S.P. Tyagi, Gurgaon**

I have gone through the first two issues of The Defence And Security Alert (DSA) and I have been very much benefited. Let me congratulate you for bringing out a magazine of first-class quality with well researched articles from knowledgeable and well respected authors with vast hands-on experience in defence and security matters. I am sure that the same would be widely welcomed by all concerned with security issues. The articles cover a wide range from domestic policing to international relations which affect the security scenario. The production values are superb with sharp maps in attractive colours, good photographs and with data presented in tabular form. I hope you would keep up the quality and I wish the magazine a large readership and all success.

**K. Padmanabhaiah IAS, New  
Delhi**

Your inaugural issue provides an overview of the internal security scenario in the country. Ashok Parthasarathi's lines are a revelation of the hitherto little known views of Jawaharlal Nehru on the Chinese. The story on Maoists is exhaustive and could have been more brief and direct. The articles are well researched and the journal provides a good medium for critical appraisal of the Nation's Security. Ajit Doval's insight into the Valley's situation is a valuable contribution.

Congratulations on your effort.

**K. VIJAYA RAMA RAO (IPS),  
Hyderabad**