

## **NATO Drawdown, Threat Scenarios in Afghanistan and Its Implications For Pakistan and Central Asia**

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When Barak Obama took oath as President for the next term he pledged to change the US Policy. The expected changes were the drawdown of forces from Afghanistan. Over a decade US had been fighting war in Afghanistan resulted into lot of losses in term of lives and finances; US sacrificed over 2300 lives and 19,000 injured whereas US \$650 billion have been spent on this war. This war has never been conclusive so far. The corrupt Afghan government is no way in possession to be taking responsibilities rather it has been challenged by armed groups all over. The economy has been largely dependent on international aids whereas this base is also shrinking.

*Key Words:* Drawdown, policy, government, security, economy.

The US public is skeptical of the US commitment in Afghanistan because of high costs and mostly nothing is in return of Afghan war. However US has been continuing fighting and somewhat able to prevent re-emergence of terrorist's while trying to promote peace and stability in the region. The situation if going in right direction could be undermined by pulling out of US forces from Afghanistan. As Council Special Report explains, 2014 will be a pivotal year for Afghanistan. New government of Afghanistan has already been constituted with Ashraf Ghani, an intellectual and scholar as President. US military is in the process to transfer the responsibilities of the security to ANSF; thereby making war effort as Afghan based leading.

With regard to the security environment in Afghanistan, think tank advised for staying of thirteen thousands US soldiers to pursue a "foreign internal defense mission." These troops with support of NATO would be able to conduct battle when need arises. Additionally they will train, advise and assist Afghan forces in their reorganization. Peace building will encourage world body to continue their civilian aid pledges provided Afghan government maintains its commitments for good governance and transparency. With all said and done, *the Drawdown* offers US policymakers a realistic set of options in the political, security and economic realms that are consistent with the scope of US interests, the resources the US can reasonably bring to bear and Afghan realities. Despite many challenges being faced in Afghanistan in the years ahead, it is argued persuasively that US will seek and continue its role in Afghan future.

Afghanistan has remained a battle ground for external powers for the achievement of their strategic aims. It is because of its geographical location coupled with the polarized nature of society in which ethnic groups with help of external powers battled for power. The last three and a half decades of conflict and instability have ruined Afghanistan, destroyed much of the infrastructure, disrupted trade routes and dried up the supply of labour and capital. Long time back Soviet occupation forces were evicted. Resultantly anarchy prevailed for quite some time in Afghanistan. Finally 9/11 has given the opportunity for the intervention of NATO/ISAF forces.

After the removal of Taliban and operating for over a decade, now NATO/ISAF forces are intending to move out of Afghanistan (Rosenberg, 2012). "On 22 June 2011, President Obama announced the drawdown of forces from Afghanistan. With this, the transition begins in Afghanistan. This all were to be carried to conclude the war with a responsible end. This plan was having a forecast of national reconciliation programme to include Taliban in the folds. In this transition, ANSF are in the process of taking the security responsibilities of the entire Afghanistan and leaving the training role for NATO with an option to use them in case real emergency exists.

Now we can have a glimpse of the NATO forces since its arrival at Afghanistan; a total of 1, 50,000 NATO troops remained operative in 2012, however in November 2013, the number reduced to 87, 000 of which 50,000 were of US (NATO 2013). These NATO troops have been planned to be pulling out by December 2014 or at the start of 2015 or as the situation dictates. 50,000 US forces were halved in February 2014

whereas the remaining NATO troops from Georgia (1,550), UK (7,900), Poland (1,550), Italy (2,800) and Germany (4,400) will be also withdrawn by the end of 2014. Australia has already pulled its troops by 2013 (Parashar 2013).

The time span for pulling out of soldiers is being broadly carried out in two stages; **first**, the pulling out of 33,000 troops which has already been over, **secondly**, 74,500 troops would be moving out by the completion of transition in the second phase of withdrawal. As of now after the withdrawal of the rest of the troops, 13,500 troops will still be stationed for indefinite period in Afghanistan (Parashar, 2013).

When NATO troops (deployed in Afghanistan) withdrew, a new great game will emerge among the great powers. Massive cuts in aid and military budget will precipitate much down turn and slump in Afghanistan. It is believed that cooperation among great powers like US, China and Russia is not visible in the scene on the issue of Afghanistan in the near future. This situation is posing grave security threats not only for the Afghanistan itself but also for Central Asia and Pakistan. The aim of the article is to highlight NATO drawdown, threat scenarios in Afghanistan and its implications for Pakistan and Central Asia with view to give pertinent recommendations.

#### **Mission of NATO Forces in Afghanistan:**

The main role of NATO troops in Afghanistan was to help the government authorities to create security environment across the country. ISAF's mission was spelled out comprehensively well before arriving of NATO Forces in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Roadmap for Drawdown Plan:**

Draft of roadmap was prepared hoping to make a comprehensive plan in coordination with Afghanistan to endorse the views of "conference on security" held on 20 July 2010 at Kabul. The Communiqué at conference had already reiterated the support of the world community that "ANSF should be able to conduct and lead operations in Afghanistan after 2014". Well thought out principles were set forth by the transition plan. (Tadjbaksh 2013).<sup>2</sup>

#### **Summit at Chicago Held by May 2012:**

It was agreed upon in Chicago Summit held on 20 - 21 May 2012 that NATO mission will end by 31 December 2014. It was also agreed that ANSF will be in command by mid 2013. During the transition period the NATO operation will transform into training, advising and assisting. The commitment was further reiterated by Prime Minister of UK that British troops will withdraw by 2015 which will be met at all costs. This was marked a milestone in Lisbon roadmap. NATO is committed to gradually drawdown its troops to end its operation in Afghanistan by the end of 2014 (Rosenberg 2013). The details of the summit have explained accordingly.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Timetable for Security Transition:**

The Security responsibility of Afghanistan as agreed in Chicago's Conference was to be gradually shifted to Afghan National Security Force. The drawdown of forces from Afghanistan started in 2011 and would be completed by 2014 in five stages. The Chicago summit had already set the security responsibility to be shifted to ANSF by mid 2013. Concurrently, NATO forces will change into supervisory role on training,

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<sup>1</sup>The missionary roles; with and without ANSF conduct operations throughout the country, conduct training and maintaining Afghan National Security Forces, constructing and developing Afghanistan by its Provincial Reconstruction Teams and helping Afghan Authorities to strengthen its institutions for establishing good governance.

<sup>2</sup>The transition plan unfolded; transition would be based on the process of requirements and practicability of its recommendations to be seen on ground, the pulling out of NATO would not be symbolized by the Transition but a progressive transfer should continue according to the potentialities of ANSF and precisely transition will involve main institutions of Afghanistan and its functions.

<sup>3</sup>The summit concluded with executive rules to follow; Afghanistan will not be allowed to become the safe haven of terrorism, the Government of Afghanistan is firm to its commitment to be transformed into a democratic society so as to be fighting corruption, adhering to the rule of law and other international norms, NATO will be encouraged to assist Afghanistan beyond 2014, NATO is invited by Afghan Govt to continue its stay in Afghanistan for imparting training to ANSF, Afghan govt and NATO to increase their negotiations towards continued cooperation, Commitment to execute the resolution 1325 of Security Council on security, peace and women and NATO is welcomed by Afghan Govt to continue its assistance for security in Afghanistan even afterwards 2014.

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advising and supporting. Mr Karzai has summarized as, “2013 means, the lead will be given to Afghans, except for a few provinces, or areas where we would still need the foreign forces' presence”.

### **Threat Scenarios in Afghanistan**

Unless very well planned, NATO pulling out can engender the entire region. The NATO pulling out will necessitate a sudden amputation in military consumption. In addition, NDN (Northern Distribution Network) will reduce or stop its stockpiles that will be huge blow for the interests of various govts and other agencies. The threat scenarios will possibly be emerging after the withdrawal of NATO forces;

1. **Threat Scenario – I.** That, Afghan govt will be unable to continue its rule due to poor law and order situation. Resultantly Taliban with help of other insurgent groups will take over Afghanistan.
2. **Threat Scenario – II.** That, Afghanistan will face protracted civil war like situation. This will create security dilemma for the regional powers who will be forced for intervention against their will.
3. **Threat Scenario – III.** That, on the wake of a rapid collapse of the Afghan regime, the immediate neighbouring countries will also be vulnerable for prevailing Taliban effort to use their proxies.
4. **Threat Scenario – IV.** That, Taliban will quickly take over the country or will have a protracted civil war like situation. Such situation will nullify the US and EU etc economic gains in Afghanistan.
5. **Threat Scenario – V.** That, with all odds, Afghan Govt could maintain to signify a developing, secure and peaceful Afghanistan. In such situation Central Asia will transpire under an effective domain of Sino - Russian collaboration.
6. **Threat Scenario – VI.** That, an armed coup and counter coup keep seizing here and there or parts of the country. In this, neighbouring countries will have to face Afghanistan as troubled country of pronounced ethnicity.
7. **Threat Scenario – VII.** That, Taliban is given share in the govt through intense negotiation. This may be considered otherwise as US retreat unless proper projected.

### **US /European Aids and Ground Realities:**

US and its allies were needed to evaluate the futuristic profitability to adjudge on taking the risk of making commitments in Afghanistan. Therefore it is difficult to predict that Afghanistan can get the level of aid as requested for a protracted period well beyond 2014 (Office of the President 2011). In this context instead to increase aid, US and European Allies as part of exit strategy from Afghanistan, have already begun in cutting the aid. US \$ 1.5 billion descend in US development aid has been observed in 2012 (in 2011 it was US \$3.5 billion and in 2012 it was approximately US \$2 billion). Over fifty percent cut has been seen in aid for supporting democracy, rule of law and good governance (from US \$ 231 million to US \$94 million). NGOs and aid giving agencies have eliminated their aid programmes and many are making major cuts (Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan (2014).

In all of probabilities of getting aid or not, Afghanistan will remain a weak and divided state hence will be depending on US and outside aid beyond 2014. The security tool which is being left to handle the situation after the drawdown is the Afghan National Security Force, which is in no way compatible to the security environment of Afghanistan. It will not be able to sustain the pressure of insecurity hence will not able to manage the troubled situation in Afghanistan. The Afghan government is barely functioning in Afghanistan. The West should be blamed for instituting the constitution of Afghanistan aimed at centralization of power. President of Afghanistan has been given tremendous power to control the funds, who could not do much to encourage effectiveness of the government at the provincial and district levels. Success may require much deliberated mechanism in shape of strong security measures and provision of appropriate fund to avoid civil war and economic recession much before the perceived time of drawdown.

### **Challenges in Afghanistan:**

#### **Security**

Maintaining security in Afghanistan is a biggest issue. It becomes very difficult to continue training sessions of ANSF because of taking extra security measures whenever there is surge in terrorist attacks on camps. In addition, Afghanistan is hesitant to send troops for training purposes to Pakistan however initiatives have been taken through sending six cadets to be trained in Pakistan Military Academy. With regard to ANSF, US and Australian trainers analyzed that out of the total 200 battalion of ANSF only a few can conduct military operations. The flaw is in its enrolment mainly of not representing the proportionate population like Pashtun, Uzbeks, Hazara and Tajik. Hence the ANSF is being organized on fault line (Cordesman 2012).

Desertions in the forces are the other areas which are on the increase. Then there are suspicions about these forces on the issue of their credibility whether they should be trusted or otherwise. As there have been individuals recruited in the past who harmed the trainers and leaking secrets to Taliban. Is this plight of transition is trusted and workable? If not then what should be taken into account so that things are worked for the transition. Do we consider these forces to control the lofty mountains of Afghanistan where there are hideouts of militants? It is highly questionable; therefore this shift in responsibility should be analyzed in its true perspective.

On the other hand, Afghan Air Force is also passing through the critical stage of its inception. NATO forces are carrying out combat missions with close support of vibrant NATO air force but how this kind of support will be available in case security responsibility is shifted to ANSF. At the moment Taliban don't enjoy worthy support like in the past but still Taliban are maintaining good control over the areas to make them no go areas. Nobody can dare to enter in them without the permission of Taliban. Many believe that the new security agreement recently signed by US and Afghan Government will make ANSF well placed whenever they will be encountering Taliban.

US will be keeping around 13,000 troops for the maintenance of security and training however will be available on calls till 2024 for ANSF. The responsible end of the operation in Afghanistan is not in total lurch. But still NATO forces will be encountering strong resistance from militants which will have deep impact in the entire area (News Desk 2013). If government of Afghanistan is not strong enough after 2014, then it will not be able to fight Taliban thus Taliban will be resurfaced to the extent of establishing own system of checking and monitoring. To be capturing governance by Taliban will be a difficult proposition but the resurfacing is engraving in the minds of many Afghans after the pulling out of NATO troops.

According to The New York Times journalist Matthew, "a complete withdrawal from Afghanistan could be far costlier than it was in Iraq and it would force European powers to pull their forces as well, risking a dangerous collapse in confidence among Afghans and giving a boost to the Taliban, which remain a potent threat" (Rosenberg 2013). Taliban at the moment does not have the capability to capture cities etc and there would be a change phenomenally in the nature of the fighting between ANSF and Taliban. However this fighting will continue for atleast a decade in future. After the NATO pulling out, fighting will be changing its mode some time getting intense and some time slowing down (Devine & Kassel 2015).

Additionally, ANSF inspite at an embryonic stage will be fighting on two fronts; **first**, it will be combating Taliban, who will be using its capacity to recapture lost territories in the far flung areas, **secondly**, to degrade the security apparatus to the lowest ebb thereby the army would demoralize and would be forcing to desert. (Tomas & Wagner 2013: 56-77) Former US ambassador in Pakistan, Richard Olson reconfirmed the US stance on the issue of withdrawal who said that the US withdrawal is not an exit rather US will pursue its battlement in Afghanistan after 2014. He restated President Obama, "US govt will develop durable collaboration with Afghanistan to eliminate the worries of an initiation of attack on US in future" (News Desk 2013).

### **Economy**

Foreign aid is the only source on which Afghanistan's economy is dependent but this source has been dried considerably. Mostly all resources including media being funded by foreign sources; even Radio, TV and other sources of communication are either reduced to the minimum or closed down. If law and order situation persists, the investors from outside world will abandon their pending projects in Afghanistan. The shambling economy cannot sustain this hefty blast. It is deduced that in war situation where there is instability and insecurity after 2014, the foreign donors will cease their investments in Afghanistan (Tomas & Wagner 2013).

Moreover after 2014, Afghan currency will not maintain its position because of economic situation of the country. In such situation Afghan government needs to chalk out plans to convert to its own based backing system than on dollars and Euros. The feeble economy of the Country will severe the other burning problems of Afghanistan. New York Times remarks, "NATO forces withdrawal may also jeopardize vital aid commitments. Afghanistan is decades away from self sufficiency, it currently covers only about 20 percent of its own bills, with the rest paid by the US and its allies" (Rosenberg 2013). In the absence of any Afghan strategy, the poor economic situation will deepen the status. It is evident from the fact that Afghan government has yet to plan about the salaries of ANA and Police. This grave economic situation has seldom become a part of the post 2014 agenda (Yusufzai 2010).

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Dependency on aid has not let the country to work for trade during NATO period. Afghanistan needs to be focusing on trade with its neighbours. This way Afghanistan economy can be saved from disaster after 2014. Side by side taxation policy has not been introduced and Afghanistan does not have sound base of taxation which is in dire need to run the country's affairs. Adapting to some tax collection process will be a big issue after 2014. Afghanistan has not expended in industrial sector in any shape whereas Industries are playing heavy role in shaping of economy. (Ahmadzai 2013) On the other hand smuggling and corruption in Afghanistan has hollowed the entire system of governance.

### **Insight of Civil War**

In all threat scenarios there is a possibility of civil war after 2014. The situation aversion can be tracked down only if all stake holders strike some political deal. Though it is highly complex but still efforts should underway in some way among all parties, however no obvious result is expected in the present environment. Afghan government opposed the dialogue process between Taliban and US and vice versa. The matter is so volatile that Afghan government opposed even a meeting between US and Taliban officials organized by UN in Turkmenistan. Same way US does not accept Taliban's conditions of releasing of Taliban from their captivities. The peaceful talks could be resumed which was suspended in March 2012 after softening of stances (Tomas 2013).

Taliban and NATO fought each other over more than ten year of war. If Taliban are given part in power; this will call for civil war, because Taliban will start taking revenge for their martyrs from Afghan or NATO forces. The withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2014 is likely to be followed by a civil war between a predominantly non-Pashtun security apparatus and Taliban forces. If US pulls out its forces from Afghanistan without placing any political resolve then there will be anarchic situation thus obviously an eruption of civil war will take place (Devine & Kassel 2015).

This instability will take the region especially Pakistan in its folds. However, Afghan journalist Mujeeb Angar has optimistic and rejected the possibility of civil war in Afghanistan after 2014. According to him, Afghans have now become billionaires and have also tasted power during tranquility. They would never repeat the mistake of initiating war, however, no doubt there will be trouble in the southern provinces like Paktia, Zabul, Khost and Paktika. Mostly various groups in Afghanistan like Uzbek, Hazara and Tajik have constructed beautiful buildings and other constructions along with various units of industries. Those well established people will not throw themselves in war again. While thinking positively, it should happen the same way as reflected by Mujeeb Angar, but there is linkage with filling of vacuum by extremists instead of moderates inside Afghanistan and the same can happen after NATO withdrawal (Khan 2013).

### **Political Crisis**

Before the presidential election of May 2014 a weak government was in place in Afghanistan. Now there is coalition government in Afghanistan and they have all the capacity and capability to underscore various strategies inside and outside Afghanistan. This government is believed to establish its writ throughout Afghanistan as well as to bring harmony among various ethnic groups inside Afghanistan however; power sharing will be a great challenge. Unless this is done, deprivation, and intolerance among the groups can create political discontentment. To be critically analyzing due to Taliban factor Pashtuns were not given share in power. Moreover it is also believed that Afghan government can be disintegrated within itself due to many obvious reasons. Desertion in ANSF can disorganize the forces to the maximum resultantly the deserted forces can join Taliban groups.

Taliban have many sympathizers in the Afghan interior ministry and ANSF that can create turmoil in the internal political situation. On joining the Taliban camps then the turmoil will turn into embarrassment and will be out of control. Neither US and nor Afghan government will be able to control this big challenge. Though Afghanistan has regained much of the lost traditions; it has reconstituted its army, restored national anthem and flag that were swept away. The government structure is also restored to a great extent, however, how political situation will move after 2014 in Afghanistan, is very important. Whether UN peacekeeping forces will be appointed to watch the security and political situation or not will be a question for survivability (Devine & Kassel 2015).

The political structure is still very weak in Afghanistan and the political parties have yet to attain its maturity, as Afghanistan has entered into democratic processes after a 30 years political turmoil and war. Due to uncertain situation and the embryonic political environment, Afghans are hesitant to return to their home

from Pakistan. Political turmoil, therefore, can be another challenge to Afghanistan after 2014. Though a weak political set up has been restored in Afghanistan, but still it has its importance. Large scale rigging were reported in the presidential elections. Even Senator John Kerry confessed it by saying that America knew about this rigging but has kept a compromised silence. It was a very common perception about Afghanistan that, "*da cha sara topak wi hakmumat da hagh wi*", (Those who have guns, will rule). The present Parliament is factionalized institution consisting of indignant representatives. This dissension and negative behaviour in the parliament can lead to posit an astounding threat to politics in Afghanistan (Kanwal2015).

Taliban perhaps being hopeful of their victory in a year or two, are not showing much interest in talks. After Soviet Union exit from Afghanistan, due to inefficient and disunited Afghan leadership, civil war erupted that too in the presence of the agreement to help in resolving the conflict. The blame can be given to the leadership crisis as no serious effort was undertaken to resolve the issue. The situation is not different than the previous; rather it is even tougher and tenser. It is sure that Taliban resistance will continue till the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan. Majority of both ANSF and Taliban are Afghans; it means Afghans are fighting against each other, which is a clear indication of impending civil war. (Rosenberg 2012)

The glaring difference in Soviet and US exit is that Soviet Union completely withdrew its forces from the landlocked country. However, US have repeatedly announced that they would not repeat the past mistake and would leave behind some troops on ground while keeping the central Asian perspective in view. In nutshell the Soviet withdrawal was a complete exit, while the US has partial withdrawal plans, and this is the main difference, however, time will show how the outcome of both the decisions may be different. Soviet Union and US were the intruders, Soviets made their way into Afghanistan with the help of a small group of communist supporters and likewise Northern Alliance has fully backed US (Policy Brief 2011).

Soviet Union and US exit from Afghanistan have both similarities and contrasts. At the time of Soviet Union pulling out, the world was bi-polar and there was Cold War between both US and Soviet Union. Comparing to Soviet invasion now the key players in Afghanistan believe in peaceful Afghanistan and pin their own stability with calm and tranquility. With several other changes, the nature, thinking and living style of Afghans have also changed, a new generation has now grown up who believe in peace and peaceful living. Some realities are common in pulling out of troops, like US is leaving a politically and economically weak government in Afghanistan amid the mounting foreign interference as was left by the Soviet Union. (Khan 2015)

#### **Drawdown Implications for the Region including Central Asia:**

From post withdrawal of 2014, different scenarios can emerge, but the most threatening one, is the continuation of poor law and order situation and instability. This anarchic situation will destabilize the entire region. There is long lasting stakes for the neighbours in a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. However, due to their vested interests, these neighbours become sources of insecurity and uncertainty hence they involve sabotaging the peace outlook. This situation will endanger the entire region especially the countries those are located nearby and enjoy good relations with Afghanistan.

#### **Pakistan and Central Asian Republics**

Pakistan has long historical linkage with Afghanistan. It pledges healthy support for ANSF. As a good will gesture, Afghan Army Chief General Sher Muhammad Karimi was invited to review passing out parade at Pakistan Military Academy. This will go a long way in establishing good military relationship between both the countries. Considerable bilateral trade is conducted between both the states. Pakistan has been looking after the Afghan refugees over long period. Being an ally of NATO, Pakistan suffered heavily in the war on terror. It is very terrible for Pakistan that war in Afghanistan has spilled over in Pakistan and most of the parts of Pakistan are under insurgency like situation. Pakistan had suffered over 60,000 casualties and incurred an economic loss of approximately US \$ 125 Billion in exports, foreign investment, industrial output and tax collection due to the war on terror (Akhter 2013).

Moreover it is feared that an unstable Afghanistan could lead to aggravate the problem of narcotics, intensify extremism and militancy in both the countries. If the same situation continues it will have devastating effects on Pakistan. Central Asian Republics have long list of stake in Afghanistan. Afghanistan provides many opportunities to the Central Asian states to offer, these include gaining access to southern trade routes, the opportunity for investments, infrastructure construction and the opportunity to gain significance in international politics. All these are possible when there is some kind of stability in Afghanistan.

### **Other Regional Countries**

India enjoys good relations with Afghanistan and is contributing to train Afghan Security forces. India's interest in Afghanistan has two basic objectives – **first** to counter Pakistani influence and **secondly** to access Central Asian market. At large, India has been using Afghanistan to mount destabilization attempts against Pakistan in Balochistan and FATA. The perceived anarchic situation will make India to get out of Afghanistan's internal politics however its main role will remain to maintain its proxies for using them against Pakistan. Iran has strong linkages with Northern Alliance (Tajiks and Hazaras). To hurt the interests of US, it is maintaining close linkages with Taliban. Iran's long-term objectives are to counter narcotics and use Afghanistan as an energy corridor. These objectives are achievable only in case there is stability in Afghanistan.

China maintains a modest aid portfolio in Afghanistan and has stakes in communications, copper mining and oil and gas exploration. China has been showing its concerns in Afghanistan instability however it has distanced itself from the security issues of Afghanistan. Russia is interested in a stable and moderate Afghanistan however it is apprehensive about the bases being maintained by US. Chinese are also apprehensive about the future role of Taliban in Afghanistan. Russia believed that an unstable Afghanistan will spread terrorism and militancy as well as narco-trade in the region (Nopens 2014).

### **Peace Prospects in Afghanistan**

The withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan will inevitably encourage not only Taliban in Afghanistan but the anti state elements inside Pakistan and other proxies in the region. It is high time to hint on the failures of world bodies to seek solution to the problem. The stakeholders have divergence of interests in Afghanistan. There is a need to develop convergence and coherence on identifying common grounds by regional and major powers in bringing political solution to Afghanistan. A few are;

#### **Peace Prospect - Negotiations at Local Level (Afghanistan Based)**

US and ISAF are encouraging a negotiated settlement between the Afghan government and the insurgents. Some form of serious talks may begin with new Taliban entity being established in Qatar or elsewhere. The US has also signaled that it will not see the Taliban as an enemy if it accepts peace, rejects violence and joins the Afghan government. Taliban may treat the talks as part of delaying tactics to win politically, however they don't give the feelings of being defeated. If Taliban is accommodated in the peace process then the warring parties will arrive on some meaningful solution.

For this entire process the role of Pakistan is very important. It is pertinent to mention that relations between US and Pakistan are improving progressively. The mistrust between US and Pakistan was a result of a few misconceptions and incidents in the past like the raid by US forces in which Bin Laden was killed and targeting a Pakistani outpost in Mahmond Agency by US forces resulted into killing of 24 Pakistan soldiers. In reaction Pakistan expelled US advisors, closed UACV base and supply routes. At the moment relations between Pakistan and US is moderately moving in right direction.

#### **Peace Prospect at Regional Level:**

Regional peace, economic growth and interdependence in central Asia are dependent on harmony and stability among the regional states. In this connection a new equilibrium of regional powers should be established among local powers like CARs, India, Pakistan and to some extent Iran. The nature of this equilibrium will largely depend on role being played by these countries especially Pakistan and India.

#### **At Large, the Positive Role by Major Powers at International Level:**

It will pave up towards long and durable solution to the issue but is highly unpredictable during the course of transition. Regional as well as the local solutions are easy to call for if the internal problems could be dealt properly. Experts on economic development focus on regional cooperation as ways of improving the political and economic stability. Studies by groups like World Bank, IMF and Asian Development Bank indicate that this transition will be eased through cooperation and improving regional development in three different sub regions (Borger, 2011). **One**, Central Asia and the "CARs" to the north of Afghanistan, **Secondly**, Afghanistan and the border areas in Pakistan that affects the Afghanistan War and **Thirdly**, Indian and Pakistani relations within the context of South Asia and the tensions between India and Pakistan.

In theory there is an economic and political case for regional cooperation between the "CARs," Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and Iran. There is a case for a "New Silk Road" that seeks to find ways to develop and

stabilize Afghanistan and finding some regional solution to the India-Pakistan conflict usually centred on Kashmir that would help to reduce Indian and Pakistani conflict in Afghanistan. (World Bank, 2011)

However, if much is not done for the stability in Afghanistan, the end game in Afghanistan would be shaped after post 2014 that ***“Taliban and its proxies control and operate in Northern and Southern Pashtun Areas. Afghan ethnic groups are likely to create some new form of Alliance in the Northern whereas central government in Kabul will either play some limited local role, or become a key player in a form of civil conflict”.***

#### **Shift in Pak Policy Viz a Viz US Deflection towards India:**

A shift in Pak Policy could be seen in fighting terrorism at Pakistan's outlook which has attracted World especially US. It should be taken a transformation mode from failure to victory in Afghanistan for all parties including US. It could be further seen in action that US is keeping 13,500 troops for indefinite period in Afghanistan against the drawdown plan. General Raheel Sharif is leading the security part of Pakistan and his foreign trips are a reflection to pursue Pakistan's security policy. Additionally US may be watching General Raheel to be aligned with what they were needed previously.

Resultantly, now Pakistan has eliminated the words like Good and Bad Taliban therefore Pakistan is fighting its way against terrorism in its true perspective. On the other hand Afghanistan is on its way to help Pakistan to fight Pakistan's way on the assurance that Pakistan will take possible course of action for the security and stability of Afghanistan. All three (US, Pakistan and Afghanistan) are moving on one grid. This shift in policy of Pakistan is making the ground towards a responsible end of the war in Afghanistan. However, Pakistan needs to play its cards serially and very carefully.

Pakistan should also calculate as required and foresee the issues like Indian involvement in Pakistan, energy crisis, CARs economic corridor, Iran gas pipeline and then above all operationalization of Gwadar Port. To be aware of the sequences if terrorism is uprooted in Afghanistan, then there should be an assurance on issue of not asking to do more or surfacing Nuclear Issue etc. Pakistan should assume that US policy towards South Asia would bring positive results. As a result of which US needs to pursue India to refrain her and its proxies from terrorist activities inside Pakistan through Afghanistan.

#### **General Raheel Doctrine - Behind a Paradigm Shift: (Chishti, 2015)**

1. Pakistan, US and China are now cooperating and partnering over Afghanistan. India, Russia and Iran are being tossed out of Afghanistan. The GHQ led paradigm shift has three objectives:-
  - a. One, reducing the Indian influence in Afghanistan.
  - b. Two, political mainstreaming of Taliban.
  - c. Three, stabilising Afghanistan in order to mitigate potentiality of Afghan turmoil spilling over into Pakistan.
  - d. This Doctrine has been managing to haul US and China onto the Pakistani bandwagon.
2. Afghanistan has started to transfer captured Uyghur militants to China whereas China is backing Pakistan led Afghan Taliban peace talks in Afghanistan.
3. At the same time, Afghan intelligence has pledged to deny East Turkestan Islamic Movement safe haven in Afghanistan. With this development, China's state owned, risk tolerant, Metallurgical Corporation of China has pledged US \$ 3.5 billion to develop Aynak Copper mines.
4. US allows increased Chinese influence in and around China's 'Silk Road Economic Belt' in return for China's acceptance of an extended US troop presence in Afghanistan (seven airbases and five land bases).
5. US wants a stable Afghanistan and a stable Afghanistan is also in China's interests as China plans increased economic activity in and around its restive Xinjiang.
6. In 2011, Afghan President Karzai signed a strategic partnership agreement with India (the agreement included Indian military training for Afghan army). In 2013, Karzai, during a visit to India, sought Cheetah light helicopters, A2. A18 105 millimetre howitzers, tanks and other military equipment from India.
7. Now, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has withdrawn his predecessor's request for Indian military aid.
8. In February 2015, six Afghan cadets arrived in Pakistan to begin training at the prestigious Pakistan Military Academy at Kakul (PMA).



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9. Pakistan and China alliance is to become “the key to Afghan stability.” China has committed to build a hydroelectric dam on the Kunar River (the dam will provide electricity to both, Pakistan and Afghanistan).
10. China has also committed to build rail and road links connecting Pakistan and Afghanistan.
11. Face to face talks between US, Afghan officials and Taliban leaders will take place in Doha in March or April 2015.
12. Beijing has already hosted an Afghan Taliban delegation and the talks “if successful would represent the realisation of a 13 years effort to negotiate for peace with the Taliban.”
13. In 2012 and then again in 2013, the US has been unsuccessful in brokering reconciliation talks. Beijing has now “submitted a proposal to the Afghan government that suggests it could broker reconciliation talks (Chinese proposal includes Pakistan’s participation).”
14. As far as Afghanistan is concerned, Russia, Iran and India have now become wildcards.

### Recommendations

1. The strategy should be simple and clear about the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan.
2. Afghanistan should refrain from making the Durand Line as political issue rather it should settle its border issue with Pakistan because over 80 percent unrest will be over with its settlement.
3. Pakistan can only take part actively when the role of India inside Afghanistan is reduced to the minimum level of Pakistani satisfaction. In most of the brute terrorist acts inside Pakistan there are evidences of Indian involvement so India is using the soil of Afghanistan against Pakistan. Therefore the role of India inside Afghanistan should be restricted only to developmental projects. India should stop meddling into Afghanistan; this will cease most of the activities to counter Indian presence.
4. The new Government in Afghanistan has all the senses, will and understanding to find workable solutions to many of its problems.
5. Pakistan, Afghanistan and US will have to think beyond some local issues in Afghanistan. As there is huge scope for cooperation among these countries but this will be restricted to only papers unless sincere effort is done.
6. For creation of safe exit of NATO forces few minor but important things to be done are; black listing should be removed, labelling Taliban as country’s enemy should be done away, prisoners either be exchanged or released and main groups in Taliban should be given the standing role in the politics. This confidence building measures can provide safe passage for the NATO forces to exit.
7. Resistance will justify for presence of NATO forces for another considerable time. Afghanistan should expand political process to the far flung areas of Afghanistan so that people could participate in the political process. This requires activation, strengthening and registering political parties so that ethnic group should have representation in the political process.
8. Lasting peace in the war torn country could only be achieved if moderate Taliban members are allowed to participate in the development of Afghanistan’s political structure, therefore with all tactical or local finishing or involving world body like UN for the solution to the Afghan crisis, etc, there will be a requirement of major cooperating efforts at all levels as under:-

**a. Cooperation at Afghanistan Including Government and Insurgent Groups and Pakistan Level.** Sincere efforts at Pakistan and Afghanistan level is required to bring all the warring groups on negotiation table with clear mandated stakes in the future of Afghanistan. Unless this happens, chaos and uncertainty will prevail not only in Afghanistan but may spill over to entire region.

**b. Regional Cooperation (India, Pakistan, Iran and CARs).** As a first step to establishing contact among the warring groups, some mechanism like Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) be involved to discuss the issue at regional level with the main aim to establish and maintain an appropriate level of stability in Afghanistan, for this there is a dire need to bring consensus and establish close liaison among the states so that they forego their vested interests and only work for the stability of Afghanistan and the region.

**c. Big Powers Cooperation including US, China, Russia and European States.** Chicago Conference declared the affirmation of international body for maintaining solidarity over Afghan problem after 2014 who promised to give all kinds of support but they could not carry out any workable plan for handling the vacuum of security being left behind and the role to be played by major players. Therefore the big powers should ratify the efforts at local

and regional level and to give assurance to all warring parties that their concerns will be addressed at International level. It is time to sit together and start brain storming by big powers cooperation for durable peace in Afghanistan and brush aside their vest interests for long lasting stability in the region.

### Conclusion

The strategy of NATO “to clear, hold, transfer and exit” has moderately met success in getting military and political objectives. In this the important point is the insecurity situation as whole. The severity of insecurity is emerging as the approach of pulling out of forces is accumulating acceleration. The neighbouring countries of Afghanistan can largely fill this security shortfall if they agree to be lured in for acceptance of responsibilities including troops contribution as peacekeeper being mandated by UN. China, Russia, CARs, Iran, India and Pakistan have dissimilar plans because of their vest interests. All and in particular, Pakistan, Iran and India being the major regional players, require to plan together for bestowing towards peace and stability of Afghanistan.

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