

# AFGHAN PEACE AND RECONCILIATION: PAKISTAN'S INTERESTS AND POLICY OPTIONS

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**BY**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The recognition of the Taliban government continues to be a major concern of world powers which are also closely monitoring the stance of Afghanistan's neighbours on the matter of recognition. Since the fall of Kabul, Pakistan has demonstrated the policy of engagement, however as far as the recognition of the Taliban government is concerned, experts are of the opinion that recognition by Pakistan will be of no use until others follow the suit. Many in the U.S. and NATO countries believe that their "defeat" in Afghanistan could have been avoided had Pakistan not played the role it did. Hence, Pakistan needs to consider the great powers' perspective on Afghanistan meanwhile ensuring that it facilitates humanitarian assistance in the war-torn neighbour. Moreover, experts assert that the Taliban are capable enough to further their agenda on the regional and world stage and Pakistan needs to avoid assuming that role.

Cross-border migration remains a pronounced worry of the Pakistani government, but due to border fencing and strict security measures the phenomenon has so far been under control. However, if further humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan is not prevented, more refugees will certainly cross the border to enter Pakistan. To escape this situation, Pakistan has time and again urged the world community to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. The hosting of OIC summit is one such attempt by Pakistan. However, experts believe that OIC is less likely to be fruitful; firstly, because individually important OIC members (Saudi Arabia or U.A.E) have not given any statement regarding Afghanistan's assistance, and secondly because the issue of recognition is impossible to be tackled as all the Arab states are hesitant to accept the Taliban regime.

In the regional sphere, there seems to be a strategic pause particularly from

the side of China and Russia. After the initial initiatives and momentum, it is observed that if the Taliban do not take initiative for acquiring cordial relations, the regional states that are supporting Afghanistan might also recalculate their approach. Regional countries are not only concerned about drug trafficking and weapons trade, but they are also wary of the rise of Daesh or Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K). Experts believe that the IS-K is a direct threat to the Taliban; it is most likely to fight back and take revenge from the Taliban through suicide bombing. Moreover, Afghanistan has become a victim of the great game as the U.S., China and Russia have their own interests which are directly or indirectly attached to the stability of Afghanistan. Hence, Pakistan needs to monitor the global trends very acutely, thereby preventing itself from alienating from the world and ensuring that it does not reinforce Western allegations that Pakistan unconditionally stands by the Taliban regime.

Internally, there are two groups within the Taliban; one group which had international exposure is likely to be pragmatic, the other group that went through the war is least likely to accept the sensitivity of the crisis. Addressing this difference, the Taliban need to devise a balanced strategy that does not widen differences within the group and also not contradict with international sensitivity. Hence, the two questions that the Taliban need to address are: how will a representative government be developed in the current scenario of Afghanistan, and will the representation of religious scholars be increased in political discussions? Furthermore, the Taliban are also encountered with the question of rights of women. Though it is claimed that the situation of women has changed tremendously since the Taliban rose to power, it has been ignored that no Afghan government has ever tried to address the ground level concerns of the women. Hence, most experts believe that the fate of Afghan women can only be changed at societal level.

Paying equal heed to Afghanistan's socio-economic situation and international concerns, Pakistan needs to devise a functional strategy.

Pakistan does not have to become the mouthpiece of the Taliban while extending help to Afghan citizenry. Pakistan's thoughtful approach should be centered upon considering Afghanistan an independent state and gradually developing a bilateral framework of coalition and harmony. There is not only the need for the development of cordial relations with Afghanistan, but also the initiation of course correction in geo-economics aspects. To kick off the new era of "common future" between the two neighbours, the establishment of trade corridor can be a first step. Similarly, Pakistan can also help Afghanistan address its economic woes by creating avenues for investment and business for Afghans. Likewise, to address the institutional vacuum in Afghanistan, Pakistan can play a significant role by helping the Taliban develop their ministries. Hence, besides providing short term relief in the form of aid, Pakistan also needs to encourage socio-economic and institutional stability of Afghanistan that comes from within Afghanistan.



# EXPLORING PAKISTAN'S POSITION, INTERESTS & POLICY OPTIONS

## Introductory remarks by Muhammad Amir Rana

I welcome you all to this second consultation by PIPS on Afghanistan, which is the further expansion of the first consultation in which the emerging and evolving scenarios of Afghanistan and Pakistan were discussed. Last time, we focused on the issues related to the diplomatic challenges for Pakistan, prospects for Afghanistan and their implications for the region. Today, we will continue the same discourse, but it will also cover the emerging security challenges for Pakistan. Moreover, we



will look into the emerging economic and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and its impact on Pakistan's economic and political landscape. At the same time, we will discuss the regional collaboration or cooperation, as OIC announced its special meeting on December 19, 2021, in Islamabad and the support we are anticipating from them, keeping in view the dominant discussions about the summit that will help Pakistan and other regional countries in recognition of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Apart from that, we will also discuss the life of the Taliban regime, whether it is a temporary

phenomenon or it is deeply entrenched in Afghanistan's socio-political tribal structures and how it will impact Pakistan.

We have invited learned experts on this topic, who are well aware of the situation in Afghanistan and are familiar with the discourse. I thank all the participants, as they spared time coming from Karachi, Quetta, Lahore, Peshawar and elsewhere.



**Amir Rana:** *How do we see the evolving humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, what is Pakistan's response so far, and how much can Pakistan contribute to addressing these crises in Afghanistan and motivating the international community to help Afghanistan? .*

**Maulana Abdul Qadir Luni,** Head of JUI- Nazriyati Balochistan

I thank all the respected organizers who invited us to be part of this consultation. As far as the current situation of Afghanistan is concerned, we have close relations with the group in control in Afghanistan. Afghanistan and Pakistan are highly interlinked with each other; if there is turbulence in Afghanistan, it will have a domino effect on Pakistan, causing turbulence in Pakistan as well. Similarly, peace in Afghanistan will help establish peace in Pakistan. The perils we used to receive from Afghanistan have been diminished entirely in Balochistan.



Afghanistan and Pakistan are highly interlinked with each other; if there is turbulence in Afghanistan, it will have a domino effect on Pakistan, causing turbulence in Pakistan as well.

The unrest prevalent in Balochistan is due to complete ignorance of the province by the state, not Afghanistan. [In many instances] people [were seen] migrating from Balochistan to Afghanistan, as they felt more satisfied there. In order to establish peace in Pakistan, the government and all the



political parties must work for the people of Afghanistan and try to maintain peace and bring economic development in Afghanistan.



**Amir Rana:** *What is the media situation in Afghanistan, and what is your take on Maulana Luni's comments that people are actually migrating to Afghanistan?*

**Shahzada Zulfiqar,** Quetta-based senior journalist, President PFUJ

Business communities, in order to look for opportunities do travel but while looking through an independent view, many have migrated from Central Afghanistan to Quetta. UNHCR has stated that people are suffering, and the government structure has deteriorated entirely. A common man has not received income for months and they are striving to settle in foreign countries. There are no refugee camps, and it has been reported that Afghan nationals in Karachi were sent back to Afghanistan. Although due to Pakistan policies a smaller number of people are capable of migrating, those who have Pakistan's documents are arriving in Pakistan easily.



**Amir Rana:** *The issue that is prevalent in Gwadar and after the fencing at Iranian border is that trade, smuggling and informal structures have been highly disturbed. Will it be an opportunity for Afghanistan to fill the trade gap and the products that were bought from Iran can be accessed from Afghanistan or it becomes an alternative route between Balochistan and Afghanistan?*

## Sami Yousafzai, Expert on Afghan Affairs

First of all, I will comment on what Mr. Luni said. After the fall of Kabul, several videos came out that explicitly showed a large number of Afghan people migrating from Afghanistan. Afghans are still staying here in Pakistan, as there are several issues in Afghanistan and the circumstances are becoming worse with every passing day. So, Afghans are preferring to shift to Balochistan and KP, rather than staying in Afghanistan. As far as Gwadar and Balochistan is concerned, they are deprived of industrial and agricultural systems (due to infertile land and droughts), thus as an alternative, they receive smuggled resources from Iran. The political institutions gave permissions (token) to specific people (for lobbying) to trade easily. Since not everyone is provided with the grants to travel, trade and smuggle, it gives rise to the hunger and poverty in Gwadar. Moreover, Gwadar lacks basic amenities such as clean drinking water, electricity, roads to travel (motorways). On the whole, the situation in Balochistan (specifically in Gwadar) is agonizing. Similarly, Afghanistan suffers from much more excruciating circumstances and further exacerbated due to U.S. led sanctions and frozen assets, compelling people to commute to Pakistan instead. Hence, Afghans vehemently and helplessly come to Pakistan for the opportunities and for survival.



Afghanistan suffers from much more

excruciating circumstances and further exacerbated due to U.S. led sanctions and frozen assets, compelling people to commute to Pakistan instead.



**Amir Rana:** *How do you see the arising economic turmoil in Afghanistan; how can Pakistan contribute to resolving the crisis and how is Pakistan going to be affected from the prevalent economic turmoil in Afghanistan?*

**Asif Ali Khan Durrani, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran**

According to my perspective, the complications are escalating in Afghanistan. Ironically, it is the first “victory” in which the conqueror is appealing for help. Afghan forces lacked resources since April, which means that the “the collapse had started before the fall of Kabul.” So, Afghanistan was deprived of socio-economic justice during the presence of the U.S. as well. Hence, the “so-called democracy” in Afghanistan that was established in the last two decades, proved to be ephemeral because the democrats who were instigated as presidents (either Hamid Karzai or Ashraf Ghani) were inexperienced. The process of democratization cannot be attained in two decades coercively, as the society of Afghanistan is a “cultural theocratic order”, intrinsically and characteristically. The U.S. and the rest of the world is less likely to be afflicted from the hunger and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. I believe that challenges are abundant, although bare subsistence level assistance will be provided to Afghanistan by western states. I have calculated that approximately \$2.5bn in humanitarian assistance are needed for one year. The European Union, the U.S. and China have announced \$1.15 million, \$16million and \$31million humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, respectively. Similarly, Saudi Arabia and U.A.E have decided to establish embassies within Afghanistan. Although, Afghanistan has the resources (\$1 trillion gold reserves, but in an impure form), and it lacks capability to utilize them.

To conclude, I do not believe that the Taliban has defeated U.S., in fact, it was a unilateral decision taken by the U.S [to withdraw]. Similarly, the Soviet Union also left unilaterally, and it was never defeated. Even if Pakistan diplomatically recognizes Afghanistan and decides to provide humanitarian assistance, it will not bring any fundamental impact on the current circumstances, till the rest of the world follows suit. The immediate neighbors of Afghanistan are hesitant to recognize the Taliban government. Unfortunately, women and children are going to be the most affected from the impending humanitarian crises. We need to understand and think about

the ground realities and change mindsets, as well as, the structural policy making system to resolve the crisis.



**Amir Rana:** *What should we expect from OIC and what collective response are we going to receive from the Muslim countries?*

**Dr Zafar Nawaz Jaspal**, Professor at the School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

I believe that an OIC meeting will proffer a similar response as it has always generated. If Saudi Arabia decides to provide assistance, it will be given with their own terms and conditions, and so will the other states. Afghanistan is not in a position to alienate the Iranian factor and sectarianism. OIC announcing an assistance in accordance with Afghanistan's situation is less hopeful. The alarming factor that seems to happen is that such assistance can aggravate sectarianism.



**Amir Rana:** *What is your take on the economic turmoil in Afghanistan and how is it impacting Pakistan?*

**Maulana Abdul Qadir Luni**

I want to say that nationalism is not a problem anymore. The representatives are chosen according to a region's nationals; Uzbeks and Tajiks majority regions are being administered as per their preferences. Unlike previous governments, where conflicts rose on the basis of nationalism, this is the only government where such issues do not exist. Secondly, Afghanistan

is a war-driven country which has been a conflict-zone region for the past forty years; the two known superpowers, USSR and U.S., used their all resources to shatter the country so how can one claim that it is imploring for assistance. Our country has completed its 76 years of independence and we are still requesting for loans from the IMF; Afghanistan does not have such a problem. Thirdly, women have been given respect and rights by our religion, Muslims are only spreading the propaganda of the West. The dignity of women was desecrated in the past forty years, but now the honor of women is protected.



*Maulana Abdul Qadir Luni reviewing the economic state of Afghanistan*

### **Sami Yousafzai**

As far as the economic situation is concerned, it is a fact that Taliban are themselves in a predicament. The Finance Minister of Taliban, Mullah Gul Agha Akhund does not know how to read and write. So, the economic situation is overwhelming, which has been the consequence of ignorance

and abhorrence. Before the collapse, more than one billion employees were getting their due incomes regularly. I believe the economic system has been distraught totally which is coupled with the visa restrictions imposed by the government of Pakistan. In addition to it, the trade has been brought to halt as dollars cannot be traded due to the collapsed banking system. I have never witnessed such a structural downfall and anarchy in Afghanistan. Taliban assert that it is a government of all, but I believe it is the government of Taliban for the Taliban (as it includes 90% illiterate Pushtoons from South, 2% Uzbeks, 2% Hazara, 5% Tajik Taliban) and there are no other representatives and systems. I believe that the humanitarian crisis of Afghanistan and economic turmoil are excruciatingly agonizing with every passing day.

Nonetheless, if the Taliban government is recognized, it will encourage other militant groups to seize their respective regions quite easily.

**Lt. General (retd) Nasser Khan Janjua**, former National Security Advisor of Pakistan

Afghanistan is a highly anticipated problem coupled with emerging dynamics. For the past forty years, two superpowers have tested their supremacy in the region. Along with that Pakistan wreaked havoc on itself, due to our own predilections, and issues of frontline states. On the whole, we always had a soft corner for Afghanistan, we took care of their generations and sacrificed considerably along with them. We supported them to such an extent that we were alleged to be 'sleeping with the enemy'. The circumstances are now becoming increasingly adverse and detrimental, and Pakistan is not exclusively responsible for the creation of these circumstances, in fact many great powers are predominantly liable for these. The most notable aspect is that two superpowers have left the region, but it took them more than forty years, and the generations have been affected by it. Due to the development and reconstruction initiative by the U.S., power center (Kabul) did seem comparatively better, but the peripheries in war ridden



Afghanistan are still standing in abysmal conditions. Meanwhile, U.S. and NATO (Forty-eight countries involved in the region directly or indirectly), and their departure in an antagonized manner with the sense of defeatism (although they wanted to leave and they left) also has its impacts. Thereby, one needs to consider the great powers' perspectives on Afghanistan as our support or a sympathetic approach for Afghanistan can antagonize the great powers more than usual. They do not want us to facilitate them in such a manner that it facilitates Afghanistan to achieve growth and development. They themselves only try to facilitate minimalism under the discourse of humanitarianism. Second dilemma that we face is that the South Asian region has been divided; U.S.'s strongest ally, India, seems to be distancing itself, and regional interests of China, Russia and Pakistan need to be laid on table. I believe that Afghanistan is not viewed considerably globally and for Afghanistan to progress the image of the country has to be changed in the international discourse and fora.



*Nasser Khan Janjua reiterating the significance of global consensus on Afghan quagmire*

Overall, I believe that the solution of Afghanistan is present in the region and Pakistan should join hands with the other regional states and must do everything it can for the sake of humanity, which can be achievable through the provision of food, aid etc.



**Amir Rana:** *Is Pakistan economically capable enough to facilitate and relieve Afghanistan?*

**Dr. Huma Baqai**, Chairperson of Department of Social Sciences, IBA Karachi

As far as the help through provision of food is concerned, it is the assistance through sustenance. The World Food Program and other international organizations are trying to assist the hunger issues in Afghanistan. I believe that the problem of Afghanistan is beyond the hunger crisis, the issue is centered upon “recognition and legitimacy”. The problem of recognition and legitimacy is coupled with the issue of frozen assets, whenever the World Bank and United Nation Development Program (UNDP) are questioned about the release of frozen assets they justify it with the technical dilemma (assets cannot be handed over to an unrecognized government). One can say that they are using the technical issue as an escape clause, but this is their stance. So, I believe that Pakistan cannot carry the burden of Afghanistan; even Prime Minister Imran Khan used the words “we are petrified” and we lack the capacity to provide food and shelter to Afghans and Afghan refugees.



We need to come up with a ‘functional strategy’ where we can pitch Afghanistan’s legitimacy and recognition.



We need to come up with a 'functional strategy' where we can pitch Afghanistan's legitimacy and recognition. As Mr. Asad Durrani said, Taliban has to decide if they can do anything to gain legitimacy and recognition and I believe that the ball is entirely in Taliban's court. There is a strategic pause from China and Russia, after the initial initiatives and momentum, which can be resumed only when Taliban take initiatives. If the Taliban did not take the initiative for the achievement of cordial relations with others, the states that are supporting them will come to an end as well, including Pakistan. Pakistan cannot afford to alienate itself from the entire world and recognize them as it will put Pakistan in the wrong light, moreover, such recognition will hardly be effective. The institutional collapse that has occurred, Pakistan can play a significant role by helping them in development of their ministries and their systems, as Afghanistan under Taliban is without the institutional framework.

So, I believe that we may counter issues of hunger, but the substantial problem is of sustainability, and Pakistan should work with the Taliban for the development of a "functional/operational strategy", which both Afghanistan and Pakistan lack. To conclude, I will say that Pakistan must not underestimate the Taliban and must not overestimate its influence



*Huma Baqai dissecting the role of Pakistan in Afghanistan's state of affairs*

in Afghanistan, thereby we must accept our limitations and do the hand holding in Afghanistan according to it.



**Amir Rana:** *Keeping in view, the collapse of TTP negotiations (as TTP was playing an important role in Afghanistan), what do you think the implications of it will be?*

**Haroon Rashid,** Managing Editor of The Independent Urdu

Whenever the assistance or development of Afghanistan is discussed, the discussions are focused on aid and assistance and less focalized on structural development. So, rather than focusing on aid, we must focus on the avenues through which Afghanistan can do business and attract investment. As far as legitimacy is concerned, I do not believe that the U.S. and international community are likely to recognize Afghanistan in the near future, because they have been adversaries for years and the U.S. administration is not in the favor of helping Taliban.



Rather than focusing on aid, we must focus on the avenues through which Afghanistan can do business and attract investment.

As far as TTP is concerned, its leader released an audio indicating that we are not in contact with the Afghan Taliban mediators and the conditions (including the release of their 102 prisoners) on which ceasefire had taken place were not fulfilled by the government. The government of Pakistan is completely silent, and we are unaware of its take on it. They agreed on a ceasefire as TTP cannot operate easily in Afghanistan. I believe, the Taliban has been going through many [other] complications, which does not bring up the issue of TTP as their priority, but it is a critical problem for Pakistan, and it can again lead the country towards insecurity and violence.

**Afrasiab Khattak**, political analyst and expert on Afghan affairs

Once again, Afghanistan has become the victim of the great game. When the Taliban entered Kabul, seven important countries were in relation with them including Pakistan, U.S., Britain, Russia, China, Iran and Qatar. These seven states have their own objectives. For example, after the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 China ascended as a global economic power after remaining stable in a chaotic global economic system. After that, the policy of the U.S. changed in Afghanistan, and they decided to bring back the Taliban.

In 2011, President Obama announced that they will start withdrawing in 2014, which will be completed by 2016; it was a rather appreciable plan. When the withdrawal started, it was appreciated by Afghans and Ashraf Ghani came to Pakistan and 48 memorandums of understanding were signed under economic, strategic, political, and social frameworks. But a



*Afrasiab Khattak deciphering the great game in Afghanistan.*

new wave of the Taliban was initiated by Pakistan on the will of the U.S., as the latter did not want to leave. The reason for the change of plans was to counter China because China is expecting the Taliban to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative. The perplexity of the situation can be analyzed by the initiative taken by the U.S. to isolate China (by not inviting China at the summit for democracy).

The Taliban consist of several factions, but two important factions are led by Haqqanis and Haibatullah Akhundzada. One faction believes that it won because they had the weapon of “suicide bombing” and suicide bombers wanted the implementation of Shariah-based system. Haibatullah Akhundzada camp believes that they were provided with legitimacy in the Doha agreement, and they tried to implement it. The hardliners are triggered by Pakistan, which serve to deconstruct the Afghan identity. I believe that Pakistan needs to change its policy while prioritizing humanitarian problems in Afghanistan. Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa has been claiming for a long time that no faction of the Taliban or Afghan people is our favorite and that Pakistan wanted cordial relations with Afghanistan. I hope that policy is put into practice. We must prioritize the humanitarian problems which cannot be achieved by closing borders.

As destruction and calamity have taken place, a new war has come to our doors. I think if we did not change our suicidal policy now, then next turn appears to be of Pakistan. As Noor Wali Mehsud said “We only aim to fly the white flag of Taliban in Islamabad.” How can it be possible for such a small group of TTP (5,000 members in total) to conquer Pakistan? But it is possible because there are supporters of TTP in the system of Pakistan.



**Amir Rana:** *Why did the TTP negotiations fail and what is your take on Wali Mehsud claiming to take over (flying the flag of TTP) in Islamabad?*

**Maulana Yusuf Shah, Secretary General JUI-S, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

The most essential aspect is the prevalence of the purpose behind the creation of Pakistan that was to develop the system in accordance with Islam; it does not matter who is in power in Pakistan. Secondly, I believe that the negotiations with the Taliban [TTP] will be eventually successful. The U.S. does not want the war and conflict to end, so it will be in favour of Pakistan to cease, and we must take all necessary initiatives to secure our country from further mutilation.

More migrants entered [Pakistan] during the time of Ashraf Ghani, and those who are entering now are not coming due to hunger and poverty issues but are the secular ones, who are not in favour of the Taliban and their government. The U.S. in the last two decades has worked to shift the mindsets against the religion and to inculcate secularism in the younger generations. Moreover, when the U.S. attacked [Afghanistan], all said the Taliban could not counter the U.S. invasion because they were technologically underdeveloped. The argument that U.S. came and left on its freewill holds no water as they did not achieve what they wanted, which should be labelled as a defeat. I believe that peace has been established and the world needs to support the Taliban, as they can easily counter Daesh (IS-K). Furthermore, economically, Pakistan is much more stressed as compared to Afghanistan.

One way or another, the world is most likely to work together to stabilize the economic and human conditions in Afghanistan. Moreover, Pakistan must

be praised as it has played a significant role to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan.

### **Sami Yousafzai**

About the TTP, the Haqqani network [of Afghan Taliban] believes that Pakistan pressurized them before time, and they are currently in a state of emergency. We believe that Pakistan must have waited a while and TTP should have been pressurized later, as a mounting pressure might lead TTP rank and file to move closer to Daesh (IS-K). As the Taliban believe they defeated U.S. through suicide bombing, Daesh can endorse suicide bombing against Taliban. The Taliban government lacks reserves and an economic system, and I believe that Pakistan has pressurized TTP at a wrong time.



**Amir Rana:** *How effective is Pakistan's management of border security in the context of drug trafficking and weapons trade during Taliban regime? Moreover, what is your take on the Hanafi and Salafi divide and whether Daesh is thriving through this divide.*

### **Maulana Yusuf Shah**

I do not agree with the severe aspects of that issue. Daesh has killed one of the members of Salafis due to the attack on an important religious scholar, making Salafis intimidated. Taliban are trying their best to resolve the issue by developing cordial relations with them and Daesh is trying its best to set about and aggravate the issue that does not even exist.

### **Maulana Abdul Qadir Luni**

Daesh mainly consists of Salafi groups, but the conflict between Salafi and



Hanafi does not exist specifically in the context of religious preferences. Taliban has confronted Daesh, even when the U.S. was present in Afghanistan, and wrecked all safe havens of Daesh. All the [terrorist] operations taking place in Pakistan as well as Afghanistan, are carried out by Daesh or by using the name of Daesh; even the TTP took refuge with Daesh in Afghanistan [at one point]. I would emphasize on the fact that there is no dispute under the rubric of religion and nationalism. As far as the issue of border is concerned, a [Taliban] commander of Kandahar said “the border security of Pakistan has certain mismanagements due to which women and old people have to face problems.” But, after conversations with the government, I believe border management does seem to be better controlled.

### **Imran Mukhtar**

I do believe that issues related to border security are rising. The border security was used to be managed by the military of Pakistan, but recently it has been given to the civilian government of Pakistan which lacks the capability due to which loopholes are quite evident.

### **Haroon Rashid**

The trade of drugs and weaponry will continue, but due to fencing the rates/prices will increase. I think such a porous border cannot be secured completely; despite being fenced completely. This is the business which will always persist.

### **Sami Yousafzai**

Fencing of the border has reduced the border crossing to a great extent. In Bahram Chāh, an international market for drugs, a proper system of taxation has been implemented for the trade of drugs. I believe that the human trafficking has reduced, but the smuggling of drugs remains persistent. Secondly, the chief leader of Daesh, Shahab al-Muhajir, alias Sanaullah, and his members are modern and educated as well. They are

considered to be most precarious, whom Taliban are trying to counter coercively. Daesh is most likely to counter and take revenge from Taliban through suicide bombing, because Taliban chose to murder and hang those who were somehow associated with Daesh. The Taliban must have come up with amnesty or reconciliation with them that I believe was a mistake at their end.



**Amir Rana:** *What are the prospects of regional cooperation for the recognition of Taliban regime and what initiatives the Taliban have been taking to get recognized?*

### **Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal**

According to the new great game, instability in Afghanistan is advantageous for NATO and Quad members, as all the neighbours of Afghanistan (mainly China, Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia via Russia) prefer to maintain stability in the region. If we expect that they will work for stability in Afghanistan, we will have to ignore the presence and the utility of huge networks CIA developed in Afghanistan. Secondly, whenever religion is imposed, the counter narratives will surface and risings against such impositions will break out. In the last 28 years, an entirely new urban generation of Afghan youths has grown, who are most likely to react if Afghanistan is not being stabilized or they are not being recognized soon and thus can create problems for us.

History proves the fact that appeasement policy is rarely successful, and those who have embraced violence cannot be deradicalized through negotiations. If they surrender, it is their right to be treated according to the law, but the amnesty for TTP is most likely to further empower such groups. As far as region is considered, strategic push and pull will continue as Putin is negotiating with the Taliban and India both. Similarly, the U.S. will remain



allied with India; when India did S-400 deal with Russia the U.S. waived the 2017 law, which prohibited states against arm deals with Russia as it will ultimately impose sanctions on these states. Tajikistan is not accepting Afghanistan and Ahmed Shah Massoud's son is staying in Tajikistan, which makes it evident that Russians are involved in the entire situation as Central Asian States cannot do anything without the approval of Russia.

Moreover, the direct or indirect funding by NATO through NGOs and other institutions will generate anarchy in Afghanistan. So, we need to clarify our objectives. Finally, one cannot ignore that the rise of Daesh as well as its rival Shia groups such as Fatemiyoun brigade or Zainabiyoun brigade.



**Amir Rana:** *How OIC can help Afghanistan and Taliban for institution-building and reconstruction?*

### **Ambassador Asif Durrani**

I believe that we must not attach high hopes with OIC, as individually important OIC members (Saudi Arabia or U.A.E) have not given any statement regarding Afghanistan's assistance. Qatar did initiate, but it also works according to the will of the U.S. At this moment, the situation is dominant with the "wait and see" scenario. It is possible that they [will] collectively take a decision, but the participation of individual and important OIC members is necessary. Secondly, the issue of recognition seems impossible [to be taken up in the meeting] as all the Arab states are hesitant to accept the Taliban regime. It is an initiative, but I do not believe that it will be worth it. In the security paradigm, no one is invincible, so is not the Taliban; if you make people conform to a certain ideology through power, then it leads to hatred and revolt. If they continue to be a role model of fear and oppression (as theocratic orders usually are), the Taliban will not lead

towards unity. Hence, we need to think realistically, the root causes need to be addressed.



**Amir Rana:** *How will the Taliban regime impact the social structure (societal trends) of Pakistan and how can it influence the women of Pakistan?*

**Dr. Fizza Batool,** Research Associate PIPS

We all tend to consider that the situation of women has changed tremendously after the arrival of Taliban, but unfortunately, it had been stern even before the Taliban regime, especially in rural areas. Moreover, we believe that opportunities and rights of women are dependent on the change of government and authorities. It does somehow as policy changes but the change and revolution at the societal level is essential. In Afghanistan, not a single government has ever tried to bring change at the ground level as changes are always limited to Kabul only.

Secondly, I believe that the impact of the Taliban regime on Pakistan is multifaceted (not limited to women), and Pakistan itself has various extremist ideological elements who believe in the victory of the Taliban, which will be a problem for Pakistan in future. Furthermore, Pakistan's rhetoric of favouring the Taliban can motivate groups in Pakistan sharing similar sentiments as that of Taliban, hence making it hard for Pakistan to justify its dual policy. Lastly, I would pose a question about how a state can bring such a narrative shift from considering TTP as an Indian sponsored terrorist organization (Indian Proxy) to our brothers who were misled?

**Afrasiab Khattak**

Afghanistan's biggest problem is that it has always remained an independent state and has always remained pre-modern. After the arrival of the USSR, the old system was tried to be dismantled, but after the arrival of the U.S.,

formation of new structure was considered/talked about. The U.S. allowed the Taliban to remain dominant, and the supply of armaments, ammunitions to Daesh through supply lines is still continued, in order to keep the structure anarchical. The U.S. and Britain still claim that China has not left its borders (BRI is limited within China), and Iran and Russia have cordial relations and are likely to do their activities in Afghanistan. Ahmed Shah Massoud's son met the commander, Ismail Khan, of Iran. These events make it evident that Panjshir and Herat are going to be the conflict zones soon in Afghanistan. So, it is critical that Pakistan should take initiatives in the next three months. There are few fault lines such as Tajiks, Turks and Daesh, and during this time if we bring the political change in Afghanistan then the turnout might be different, otherwise the civil war will take place that will take the form of proxy wars. I predict that if the proxy wars continue, Afghanistan will disintegrate, and a consensus might happen among great powers, but Pakistan and Iran will have to face the consequences of the anarchical circumstances that are likely to prevail in Afghanistan. I believe that we need to take an analytical and critical review of our politics, as we have limited time.

### **Dr. Huma Baqai**

I want to pose a question that either it is China or U.S. or Pakistan, what alternatives do all have? As Mr. Afrasiab Khattak talked about the conflict zones, but these fronts cannot play a significant role in Afghanistan. I believe that Taliban are brought in power as an only viable alternative, and silence is prevalent because there was a euphoria that Taliban will be inclusive who will abide by the Doha agreement, but they could not. Moreover, Pakistan cannot do anything significant in the next few months, but the Taliban can.

### **Afrasiab Khattak**

After 9/11, when the Taliban had been ousted, there was no alternative, but now people are uniting in Istanbul. I believe that there are many alternatives, but the question is how we handle the transition; it can either take place peacefully or there are chances of foreign intervention. It is Pakistan's

responsibility as Afghanistan lacks visible viability, as Pakistan is deeply involved in it. The fallout of Afghanistan will be equally disastrous for our country.

### **Sami Yousafzai**

I believe that, inside the Taliban government, non-Taliban are highly unsatisfied; they are not given satisfactory power, which will result in provincial collapse. Moreover, non-Taliban and other minorities want to give some time to Taliban, but the gap between the Taliban and international community is predominant. The Taliban was of the view that China, Russia, Iran and Pakistan are sympathetic to them and will recognize them, but now they have reservations with the Taliban. In Turkey, Turk nationalism highly regards Uzbek, Tajik and Turkmen, despite that all of them want to give some time to Taliban.

Secondly, the Taliban claimed that they would be different, and an inclusive Islamic government would be formed, and women would be given rights. But they failed. Nobody trusts the Taliban. Had they been politically mature, they could have convinced the international community. I believe that on a few insignificant issues, the problems between the Taliban and the international community are aggravating.

Thirdly, as far as the disintegration of Afghanistan is concerned, northern Afghanistan used to label Ashraf Ghani as a "fascist", so it is less likely that northern Afghanistan will tolerate Taliban for long. Taliban does not have a capacity, nor a vision, so we are stuck in a bubble. Moreover, the takeover of the Taliban is likely to induce other extremist groups in the Middle East as well, that establishment of such a regime is rather possible.



**Amir Rana:** *What is basically the mindset of the Taliban, and will they be able to counter the crisis prevalent in Afghanistan?*

**Dr. Qibla Ayaz, Chairman Council of Islamic Ideology**

For the past two years, we have been in contact with the religious scholars of Afghanistan, who were in favour of the Ashraf Ghani's government. It was unfamiliar for Pakistan that they were in favour of Ashraf Ghani, and in fact those who were in favour of Taliban were religious scholars or "ulema" of Pakistan.

Secondly, the U.S. has granted government or control to the Taliban but now the Taliban are themselves in crisis. Internally, there are two groups within Taliban. Members of one group, who had international exposure, are likely to remain pragmatic, but those in the second group, who went through the war, are least likely to accommodate and adapt to the sensitivity of the crisis. Apparently, it seems that the brutality and viciousness of circumstances will arrive, as all will find difficult to continue without incomes along with other humanitarian crises. I believe we need continuous negotiations with the Taliban and must specifically engage religious scholars of Pakistan. Pakistan needs to take them on board, try to understand them and engage with them. Nonetheless, the Taliban must be prepared to understand international sensitivity and for the development of a consensus ruling structure.

We need to put forward and address two important aspects: firstly, how will a representative government be developed according to the current scenario of Afghanistan; and secondly negotiations [need] to be more religious than political so that religious scholars are able to make [the Taliban] understand that in our religion international sensitivity plays an important role in state

affairs.

### **Lt. General (ret'd) Nasser Khan Janjua**

We need to look at the challenges Pakistan is likely to face globally. The U.S. and western countries are antagonized, and they never had an appreciable perspective about Pakistan, which has deteriorated further. Physically, the U.S. has left, but where will it go? The U.S. has an Indo-Pacific strategy to control the entire Asian region. If Afghanistan has a setback, it will transit to the Indian Ocean as well. It can impact China's CPEC and ultimately Pakistan. Moreover, India has always been a strategic partner of the U.S., and after the Taliban regime is in power in Kabul, the U.S. inclination towards India will increase and it will become a U.S. pivot, which will ultimately strengthen India. Secondly, as China and Pakistan's alliance is growing and Pakistan plays a pivotal role in CPEC development, Pakistan will have to bear the burden of western countries' hostility towards China. At the regional level, although unity has improved, regional disintegration is most likely if the Taliban will fail. If Afghanistan disintegrates, so will the region. Though it is a bad example, but when martial law is imposed, everyone gets frightened in the beginning about what will happen but after some time gets familiar with all the strengths and weaknesses of the situation. Similarly, the Taliban's strategic advancement to Kabul in the void created by the U.S. is no different. Currently, Afghanistan is at a stage where people are hopeful as well as hopeless. Now is the time where we can play our role because after this period the game would not be in our hands anymore. So, if the Taliban succeed this time, then the issue will be solved but if they fail to deliver governance to people, or to integrate people, then I fear that the massive force that has melted will re-emerge in forms of different groups. Afterwards when Afghanistan splits from within, the countries in the region will also start supporting their favourite sides, whose victory they will feel is beneficial to them. Then we will also go back to our 9/11 position. So, if it goes this way as suggested by Mr Afrasiab, then the matter would turn towards division. As far as the implications on Pakistan are concerned, some factors

might dictate the tilt of Pashtuns in recently merged FATA and Balochistan's Pashtun towards Southern Afghanistan. Hence, if one predicts now that in April something will happen or till April something will happen, then one must be aware of it because we want peaceful Afghanistan.

As far as the question of OIC is concerned, it will further expose us as indicated by Mr. Durrani. Though we have gathered everyone somehow, all the OIC representatives are subjugated to the U.S., thereby their messages will primarily be dictated by U.S. approach. Moreover, the way Afghanistan affects Pakistan, it does not impact any other state, hence the OIC representatives will demonstrate neutrality.

### **Dr Huma Baqai**

I would like to tell you that I was in Washington for the last 15 days and we were part of a study tour where we were having meetings exclusively at the Bretton Woods institution. One thing which I clearly understood, and which contradicts with the sentiment in this room, is that the United States is not at all upset with the Taliban. The U.S. clearly regrets the loss of engagement opportunities with the Taliban and is of the opinion that the Taliban must have been engaged in the Bonn Conference and have also been approached when Karzai had won elections. Secondly, as the U.S. sought engagement with the Taliban, it is highly estranged with Pakistan; it strongly believes that Pakistan had a role to play every time Taliban's resurgence took place. So, the equation is very difficult for Pakistan because previously our relations with America were contingent on Afghanistan, and now they are contingent on the behaviour of the Taliban. Whereas the reality is that Pakistan has no influence over the Taliban, which is a savvy political group and quite capable of steering its agenda. And that agenda is not necessarily pro Pakistan. Hence, Pakistan should constitute its policy keeping this reality in mind.

Moreover, I would like to highlight that there are clear battle lines drawn in the U.S. with its major focus on rising China. As far as Pakistan's position on

these battle lines is concerned, Pakistan is badly stuck with Bretton Woods Institutions, be it IMF or World Bank, for its economic survival. So, Pakistan should not let go off balance; camp politics are extremely unsuitable to the state. Also, Pakistan's convergence with the U.S. has always benefited Pakistan, therefore I strongly believe that China might be our strategic ally, but we cannot completely alienate the U.S. and this same approach will work in Afghanistan.

### **Amb. Asif Ali Khan Durrani**

In the context of democracy, I want to say that Pakistan has an opportunity for the first time to have a strong regional policy. Till now we had no regional policy, and this strong regional policy is emerging post Taliban's recapture of Kabul. Consequently, the immediate neighbours of Afghanistan will recognize or block the Taliban at the same time. Moreover, I think Pakistan has done right by not attending the [U.S.-led] democracy summit because the states that were not invited included China, Turkey as well as Saudi Arabia. Particularly in the context of China, America is wary that China has overtaken it in G5 especially in the domain of artificial intelligence thereby on 14th of April, President Joe Biden said that "while we remain engaged with Afghanistan, we are in new competition with China, [and] with it we will have adversarial competitive and cooperative relationship". Hence, I rest my case by saying that we did the right thing by not joining the democracy summit; this decision also reinforces that we need to change our westward looking policy and should instead focus on regional alignment.

### **Concluding remarks by the participants**

**Amir Rana:** *This is the last part of the session in which we will collect recommendations on Pakistan's response to emerging challenges and its policy framework for Afghanistan. Furthermore, I would appreciate insight on Pakistan's capability to help Afghan media and to build socio-cultural links with the Taliban regime.*



## Haroon Rashid

My prime concern is how will Pakistan resolve its longstanding issues with India if the Taliban continue to rule. The question here is whether we want zero involvement or some sort of involvement from the Indian side because they do carry out trade and maintain relations with Afghanistan. Pertaining to this scenario, Pakistan cannot rule out India from Afghanistan as it might want to, thereby Pakistan needs a specific framework to manage its equation with India in the Afghan context. Secondly, I believe that currently regional politics is dictated by religion, for instance, the rise of religious fascism in India, the emergence of anti-Muslim factions in Sri Lanka, and the militant tilt of Buddhists. Hence, the question now is whether or not Pakistan wants its foreign policy to be driven by religion. In my opinion, the less the involvement of religion in foreign policy matters, the better it is for the state.

## Shahzada Zulfiqar

In my opinion, Pakistan cannot really do much for the media in Afghanistan. Even though an initiative was taken in the form of an exchange program for journalists, it bore no fruit. Similarly, Western countries established their TV channels and to some extent journalism got established, but it was not as free as it should be. Especially after the Taliban's rise to power, journalists faced numerous restrictions and those visiting Pakistan time and again voiced their fear of not being able to work and survive in the Taliban led Afghanistan.

Moreover, I would like to endorse the point raised by Mr. Haroon and Mr. Janjua that now is the time for Pakistan to take initiative because it cannot be denied that the Taliban have risen to power. Yes, we do not have to interfere with the Taliban for serving their interests, but we do need to extend help to the Afghan citizenry. We have to responsibly tackle the situation and not repeat the mistake of showing that the 'Taliban's rise to victory is our

victory'. Pakistan should in fact assist the Taliban to realize that today's Taliban are not the Taliban of 20 years ago, meanwhile also restraining from demonstrating the approach Pakistan did 20 years back. Hence, the policy of guidance to soften and sensitize the Taliban is needed from Pakistan.

### **Sami Yousafzai**

I will have to give a reference to the program that took place in Tashkent before the fall of Kabul, where Ashraf Ghani asserted that Pakistan was celebrating for the Taliban. Here I am trying to indicate that if one's neighbour remains safe, one stays safe. Hence, we have to take care of Afghan people since we are culturally and historically connected to them; if Afghans get stuck into poverty and hunger, Pakistan will face the music too in the form of refugees.

### **Asif Ali Khan Durrani**

Afghanistan is a quagmire of which no one is happy, be it Russia, China, Iran, U.S. or even Pakistan. It is majorly because uncertainty evokes unhappiness, which in the case of Afghanistan is the fear of the unknown. All I hope is that may Allah have mercy on the Taliban, and may they be shown the right path especially in terms of their dealing with women. I believe that a wrong model of Islam has been presented leaving its impacts on Pakistan. Pakistan should also fear emerging Talibanization streaks within the state due to erosion of rule of law. Pakistan is currently not encountered with the socio-cultural situation that prevails in Afghanistan so we must not try to replicate their approach and must keep our house in order.

### **Dr Humma Baqai**

I do not think it is anymore about victory or defeat, it is now about survival. The Taliban themselves are quite wary of their survival. Meanwhile, Pakistan has invested so much in the Taliban and that is exactly what guides Pakistan's perception in the world. The U.S. openly claims that 3 presidents and 3

commanders-in-chief would not have been defeated in Afghanistan had Pakistan not played the role it did. Hence, this time we should not repeat the mistakes we made in the 1990s and we must remain on the right side of international law, as the Taliban are a savvy group that can fight its own battles.

### **Maulana Abdul Qadir Luni**

The U.S. has been admitting that they faced defeat in Afghanistan. Ten years ago, a U.S. general wrote a report, before his retirement, asserting that the Taliban [we]re returning as the people desire[d] to have justice that could be provided by the Taliban. The Taliban have sacrificed for Muslims, and it is our responsibility to accept and appreciate their sacrifices. The U.S. has carried out oppressions, bombings, and brutalities at our madrassas in Kunduz and at many other places in Afghanistan, killing several people. Afghan Taliban are not against Pakistan, they consider (such as Mullah Omer) Pakistan as their homeland, and they only believe to be at war, solely, with the U.S. They are not vicious or undisciplined men; they cannot stabilize in a few months a state that has gone through four decades of war.

### **Sami Yousafzai**

I do admit that the U.S. has bombed in Afghanistan, but the Taliban has carried out bombing in the madrassas and schools of Afghanistan. As far as Pakistan is concerned, Afghanistan has a terrible perception about Pakistan, and the narrative of Afghans is not in favour of Pakistan, and they consider Pakistan to be responsible for the advent of Taliban. Now, Pakistan has to take steps to change the narratives of Afghans and of Taliban as well. The restrictions on the border have increased, the people-to-people contacts have reduced, which needs to be alleviated through the change of policies. Secondly, the most significant challenge facing Pakistan with respect to Afghanistan is security. If TTP is pressurized further, it can create problems. Secondly, Pakistan must encourage investment from Afghans

and they should provide them with multiple visas. People of Afghanistan are not coming as refugees, but to unite with their families and due to illness.

### **Afrasiab Khattak**

Pakistan needs to come up with a new policy for Afghanistan, which should be centered upon considering Afghanistan independent and gradually developing a bilateral framework of coalition and harmony that must not be in accordance with the perspectives of China, Russia and India. There is a need not only for the development of cordial relations with Afghanistan, but also for the initiation of course correction in the aspects of geo-economics. Uzbekistan, Iran and Turkmenistan have developed trade channels (railway systems) in Afghanistan, whereas Pakistan has done nothing to promote trade. Geo-economic strategies have never been our priority, and we must [now] prioritize them as neither right nor left is against it. Moreover, soft power must be given importance, by promoting national poets (Khushal Khan Khattak, Allama Iqbal) for the promotion of soft power which is sustainable and long term.

### **Lt. General (ret'd) Nasser Khan Janjua**

I believe that our last four decades are a dark era, and we have a common future with Afghanistan. I am looking at it with the aspect of geo-economics and connectivity of entire South Asia. The three important assets that Afghanistan possesses are its population, natural resources (mines and minerals), and the geography to become a greater trade corridor. We need to connect with Afghans, increase economic trade and introduce new policies to establish a common future. So, we must develop a massive trade corridor and help to develop economic zones and stabilize Afghanistan.

### **Dr Qibla Ayaz**

We all agree on the fact that we must look at the future with respect to Pakistan and the region as well. I believe that there should be presence

of representative government and PIPS must take an initiative to question the process through which representative government can be established. Secondly, we need to address the issue of women with the Taliban who can play a major role in the development of a soft image of Afghanistan. Lastly, we need to expand the “Afghanistan Inter-ministerial Coordination Cell” in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, according to the prevalent circumstances and engage analysts on Afghanistan.