

CONSULTATION REPORT

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

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Likewise, PIPS is thankful to all the learned resource persons who participated in this ninth quarterly consultation and shared their expert knowledge on the subject. PIPS hopes to benefit from their knowledge and insights in the future too.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Taliban have been in power for two years now, but the prospects of a peaceful, stable, and inclusive Afghanistan remain elusive. Afghan women have suffered the most in the Taliban-led Afghanistan, and the regime needs to solve this issue instead of using it as a bargaining chip. Apparently, the Taliban supreme leader and some ministers are opposing girls education while many among the Taliban leadership are in favor of women getting education and doing jobs.

Pakistan has also started to feel heat of the fallout from Afghanistan in terms of border insecurity and terrorist violence. The police and security forces have been the main target of the terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and elsewhere. The TTP militants have also started their activities in northern parts of Balochistan mainly including Quetta, Zhob, Qilla Abdullah, Qilla Saifullah and Sherani districts. In the Brahui speaking Baloch areas, such as Mastung, Kalat, and Naseerabad, the TTP militants also manage to find shelter. Meanwhile IS-K has been active in certain districts including Peshawar, Bajaur and Mohmand in KP, Rawalpindi and Islamabad, and Mastung and Sibi in Balochistan.

There is a complete political deadlock and the leaderships in Afghanistan and Pakistan apparently also do not seem very much interested in getting out of it. At the same time, no one appears convinced to recognize the Taliban's de facto government including Pakistan. The biggest bilateral problem, which concerns Pakistan the most is the TTP. Pakistan's current stance is that it will not talk to the TTP, but to the Afghan government; the country lays the responsibility of solving the TTP issue on the Afghan Taliban. However, the Taliban see the TTP as Pakistan's internal issue that not only adds to Pakistan's frustration but also emboldens the militant group, which has already increased its terrorist attacks in Pakistan manifold.

In this backdrop, Pakistan must work on a strategy of countering the TTP on its own, with or without the support of the Taliban. But the option of chasing the TTP and striking inside Afghanistan could prove counterproductive. In this regard, recently signed US-Pakistan strategic partnership could also be helpful but at the same could prove an attraction point for both the TTP and Afghan Taliban giving them a pretext to step into Pakistan once again.

Pakistan needs to try to better understand Afghanistan and the Taliban and their domestic and international compulsions. Pakistan has a lot of leverage in Afghanistan, but it looks like the country does not want to use it. For one, there is no functional visa system and there is no functioning system on the border for those daily wagers who cross border to earn livelihood. Pakistan and Afghanistan need to normalize the border and evolve some effective border cooperation and coordination mechanism. Treatment of the Afghan women and children on the border needs to be improved to win hearts and minds of Afghan people.

Backdoor channels could prove useful in building bilateral trust. The influential and credible ulema from every part of Pakistan and the Pashtun nationalist leadership should go to Afghanistan and meet the Rahbari Shura and discuss the situation with them. Similarly, meetings may be arranged among the ulema of both Pakistan and Afghanistan, in Kabul, Kandahar and Islamabad. Exchanges between media and civil society organizations can also

be helpful.

Similarly, the role of ulema, especially those under whom the Taliban have studied in madrassas, can be effective in influencing the ideological base of the TTP and Afghan Taliban. However, no good teacher of the Taliban has been given this task yet. In the Taliban's view, Pakistan is a non-Islamic state and a state liable to be waged a war [jihad] against. Therefore, Pakistan needs to focus on finding a solution to this ideological issue.

Pakistan's biggest persisting problem has been the controversial civil-military relationship. It has affected Pakistan's foreign policy to a larger extent, and Afghanistan is no exception. This has rendered a very limited, security-oriented perspective to the foreign policy in which there are many inadequacies. Pakistan needs to make a complete and wholesome policy that embodies a holistic vision and feedback from all stakeholders.

The media also need to rationalize the coverage of militants' presence and attacks. For instance, the Taliban leadership's statements may be reported objectively and not for creating scare or as a tool of propaganda; that means to report only the information part. But for this, training is required for journalists, which would create media awareness. They would then be able to distinguish between the propaganda and facts.

CONSULTATION PROCEEDINGS

Muhammad Amir Rana, director Pak Institute for Peace Studies (Moderator)

This is Pak Institute for Peace Studies' ninth consultation on Afghan peace and reconciliation. These quarterly expert consultations are designed to analyze the developments taking place in Afghanistan, suggest policy options for Pakistani government in support of Afghan peace and stability, and counteract any fallout from Afghanistan in terms of cross-border terrorism and militancy. Participating experts also try to understand Pakistan's policy options in line with the emerging developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral relations.

The Taliban have been in power for nearly two years now, and there are many issues to be revisited. There has been a rapid increase in terrorism in Pakistan, including an increase in the Islamic State Khorasan's (IS-K) activities. There is also the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) issue between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has negatively and seriously impacted the relations between the two countries and could have wide-ranging implications for both countries as well as the region.

[After welcoming the participants and giving his introductory remarks, Mr. Muhammad Amir Rana invited a journalist and educationist from Afghanistan, Muzhgan Feraji, to express her viewpoints on the matter.]

Muzhgan Feraji, journalist and educationist from Afghanistan

Since the coming of the Afghan Taliban into power, fundamental human rights such as the women rights have been repeatedly violated. Moreover, the day-to-day negative developments happening in Afghanistan show that the country is not going in a positive direction. It has also been said that the situation in Afghanistan has improved, which is not true. Afghanistan remains the same as before the fall of Kabul.

If Pakistan thinks that it would succeed in convincing the Afghan Taliban to influence the TTP to stop its terrorist activities in Pakistan, it is impossible as everybody knows both these entities have supported each other for the last twenty years. The Afghan Taliban will support the TTP in Pakistan.



MUZHGAN FERAJI

If Pakistan thinks that it would succeed in convincing the Afghan Taliban to influence the TTP to stop its terrorist activities in Pakistan, it is impossible as everybody knows both these entities have supported each other for the last twenty years.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban are not letting the women to have their right of education and work. Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia are also Islamic countries; however, such rights are permitted to women in these countries. If these countries can allow the women to pursue education and do work, why cannot Afghanistan? Are the Taliban superior Muslims, or is their Islam a different one?

When the Taliban came into power, they announced a general amnesty for all those who used to work with the former republic. However, after two years no real change has been witnessed in this regard. The Taliban kill former military officers almost on daily basis. If the Taliban are not treating the Afghans well, how would they treat [well] their neighboring countries?

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you Ms. Muzhgan Feraji. Now, I invite Mr. Hashmat Vejdani to let us know his thoughts about the slow or gradual pace of improvement of situation in Afghanistan.

Hashmat Vejdani, senior member of USIP research team on peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan

Since coming into power, the Afghan Taliban have consistently been telling the media that they would change Afghanistan. While two years have passed, where is that change? The first day when the Taliban came into power, they changed the Ministry of Women's Affairs to the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. The Taliban manifesto, which was written by its minister of justice, entails obvious prejudices against women. While it is said that there is the issue of *hijab* and teachers, it must be known to everyone that there is no co-education in schools in Afghanistan. It is, however, in universities. The ladies are taught by ladies. Afghan women have told the Taliban that they will put on the type of *hijab* they want. They have also told the Taliban that they would accept any curriculum they make.

In their previous tenure, the Taliban had made similar false promises of opening the schools in a day or two, and five years passed in this dilly-dallying and schools were not opened. Now in their second setup, two years have elapsed, and the schools remain shut.

It is also said that there is no corruption in Afghanistan. During the previous government too, the officials used to take money for issuing a passport, but now the Taliban also charge money for that. If one applies for a passport and does not pay \$2000, it will take more than two years to have their turn.



HASHMAT VEJDANI

In their previous tenure, the Taliban had made similar false promises of opening the schools in a day or two, and five years passed in this dilly-dallying and schools were not opened. Now in their second setup, two years have elapsed, and the schools remain shut.

It is also said that inflation in Afghanistan has decreased under the Taliban. However, there is no money with the people in Afghanistan. During the previous regime, around 3-4 million people were working in Afghanistan and there were international organizations as well. Now, those people are jobless, and the international organizations have been shut. Only the Taliban are the beneficiary of the current situation. Yes, there has been one change. While in the former government the officers sitting in the ministries would wear suits and ties, they have been replaced by those wearing turbans.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you Mr. Hashmat Vejdani. Now, I invite Mr. Haroon Rashid to tell us about the security and general situation in Afghanistan and the region.

Haroon Rashid, Managing Editor of The Independent Urdu

There is a complete deadlock in the region and things are neither moving forward nor backward. The leaderships, both in Afghanistan and Pakistan, also do not seem very much interested in getting out of the deadlock. Although the Taliban have demanded that if their government is recognized by Pakistan then things will move forward, but on the ground, no one appears convinced to recognize the Taliban regime including Pakistan. It is not clear whether or not Pakistan is using it as a pressure tactic, but this stalemate is not benefitting anyone; nor is it helping Afghanistan and Pakistan in moving their bilateral ties forward.



HAROON RASHID

TTP is increasing its presence and operations in Balochistan. Elsewhere, it has also kept itself organizationally active which is a very dangerous situation. In this deadlock, the common man will suffer the most.

Although there are other issues as well, such as the Durand Line dispute, the biggest problem between Afghanistan and Pakistan and that concerns the latter the most is the TTP. To solve

this issue, Ambassador Asif Durrani visited Kabul recently. The army chief also gave a strong statement that Pakistan will not talk to the TTP, but to the Afghan government. Pakistan is laying the responsibility of solving the TTP issue on the Afghan Taliban. However, statements from the Taliban leadership in Afghanistan point to the contrary and stress that Pakistan should not blame and burden Afghanistan. In the current situation of deadlock, there is no certainty about who can solve the problem. Neither are the Afghan Taliban controlling the TTP nor is Pakistan capable of controlling the TTP. This situation is an ideal one for any third party interested in seeing the region in a security crisis. The third party would benefit as long as the situation of deadlock persists.

When Ashraf Ghani was in power, he used to say that he would not talk to the Afghan Taliban but to Pakistan – the Afghan Taliban's sponsor. A similar statement has now come from the Pakistani army chief as well. He has barred negotiations with the TTP, which seems to be contributing to the deadlock. There are other factors as well which are contributing to this deadlock, such as the increase in attacks by the TTP including by using other names and labels like the Tehrik-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP). However, the Peshawar CID and CTD declared that the TJP is actually the TTP. It seems that the TTP is using the tactic of creating a few minor groups, like the TJP, that would claim the attacks themselves and decrease the pressure on the TTP from both Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban.

[But the question remains that] how to deal with the TTP now? Should it be allowed to stay as a permanent thorn in the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan? [As noted earlier], besides other issues, the TTP is a major issue for Pakistan. Moreover, as it is not probable that the general elections in Pakistan will be conducted until March, it seems that the TTP issue would also be out of the national discourse till then. Although most of the time the security forces and security bodies make security policies, political forces are needed as well to approve the policies and bring them before the public for its approval. However, until March there is no possibility of anything like this happening.

Nevertheless, the TTP is increasing its presence and operations in Balochistan. Elsewhere, it has also kept itself organizationally active which is a very dangerous situation. In this deadlock, the common man will suffer the most. Militancy, which was curbed by operation Zarb-e-Azb, has come back to terrorize the people. To tackle the TTP, Pakistan must work on strategy of weakening the TTP. Pakistan needs to do this by itself.

Meanwhile the border fencing has not helped as well, as the [cross-border] terrorist attacks continue despite of the fence. And it is now claimed that in these attacks the Afghans are involved. The Foreign Office claimed that out of three killed in a counterterrorism operation, two were Afghans. On the other hand, Afghan Taliban leadership claimed that they have also killed around 18-20 Pakistani IS-K militants. If spending millions of dollars on fencing has not helped Pakistan, then what is the benefit of the fence?

Moreover, there is no possibility of a military operation like the operation Zarb-e-Azb at the moment. However, if another attack like the one on the Peshawar Police Lines' Mosque happened, then there is a possibility. In the prevailing situation, the TTP has a good and free space to operate.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mr. Haroon Rashid. Taking into account the recently made security pact between the US and Pakistan, now I invite Ms. Sumaira Khan to let us know that whether there is any recent development in the US-Pakistan bilateral counterterrorism efforts or any development in the counterterrorism collaboration between China and Pakistan?

Sumaira Khan, journalist, and expert on Afghan affairs

Before the outgoing government was signing the security pact with the US, deliberations had been going on for over a year. After assuming his charge as the foreign minister of Pakistan, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's most visits were to the US and many meetings were held both off the record and on the record about this issue. The Army Chief did not make any official visit to the US. His first official visit was to China, then Saudi Arabia, and then UAE. His focus was on the Gulf and the Middle East. However, the reason behind this was the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia. While Pakistan could not afford getting the credit for the mediation, it wanted the world to know that Pakistan had a role in resolving the long-standing military issue between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

**SUMAIRA KHAN**

When the security pact was signed, people in Pakistan ridiculed the move. They considered it as something unreasonable, thinking that a while ago Pakistan played a role in forcing the US out of Afghanistan and then signed a security pact with it.

When the security pact was signed, people in Pakistan ridiculed the move. They considered it as something unreasonable, thinking that a while ago Pakistan played a role in forcing the US out of Afghanistan and then signed a security pact with it.

Earlier, when Ashraf Ghani was in power in Afghanistan and General Raheel Shareef the army chief in Pakistan, the security pact was discussed, and the US was told that the whole situation would be controlled smoothly if it signed a defense pact. Pakistan assured the US that it would be ready to give the US forces a safe passage out of Afghanistan. Moreover, it was said that such a government will be established in Afghanistan that would be the product of intra-Afghan dialogue.

Although the intra-Afghan dialogue was the most significant part of the peace process, it did not happen despite repeated demands [from different countries]. At that time, the media was mainly focused on the Doha accords and the stakeholders in Afghanistan such as President Ashraf Ghani and parliamentarians did not sit for an intra-Afghan dialogue. Because of this, the Taliban came as an emerging power within Afghanistan. The first province, Nimruz, fell to the Taliban on August 6. It borders Pakistan and is an economic hub. Then the fall of all 33 provinces on August 15 to the Taliban is not a minor topic. The security pact was under

discussion even then. Back then it was easy to solve the problem because the stakeholders were few, however, the situation was so worse in Afghanistan that Pakistan could not bring all the stakeholders to the table. The troubles that Pakistan is facing now are the consequences of that time's situation that did not leave Pakistan with any choice. The US left and Pakistan faced the consequences.

The recent statement of the army chief has the observation of a year behind it. On the question of whether to bring back the TTP or not, there was dissent in the army as well. The former ISI chief, General Faiz Hameed, talked to the TTP. When Pakistan sent its commandant of the Western border to negotiate with a small entity [TTP] which might have been done earlier by a colonel, then higher demands should also have been expected. Eventually, it happened that the TTP came up with highly unacceptable demands. When the TTP was brought back, the people of Swat reacted. It was thought that the militants would be brought back and settled, but the people of militancy-hit-areas, who have seen much blood, did not like the idea. This sent a message that times have changed and the idea of settling the TTP in tribal areas would not be tolerated by the people, which is very much unlike the past. Therefore, the assessment proved wrong.

If, even now, the administration in Kabul is taking the army chief's recent statements lightly, they should not be taken lightly. This is because the equipment deployment on Pakistan's western border is very important, which is happening with the support of the US administration. There are problems on border with Iran and Afghanistan, due to which the border has been fenced. However, Pakistan is not dealing with Iran as seriously as it is dealing with Afghanistan. There can be various reasons for this, such as the purchase of electricity from Iran in Balochistan, the smuggling of petroleum from Iran, and the maintenance of Gwadar Port.

Pakistan has itself left loopholes. The borders are still porous despite of the fencing, because Pakistan is not able to accept the reality that there are families on both sides of the Balochistan border, that are linked through marriages. And these families are strictly connected to one another.

The Taliban officials were asked that, "if the TTP is not in Afghanistan why they said they would take the TTP to north of Afghanistan?" They were also asked, "were they keeping the TTP to pressurize Pakistan?" They said no. However, it seems that the Afghan Taliban are still taking the statements of the army chief lightly. Earlier, there was a statement from the national security committee as well in which the top civil-military brass was sitting, and a whole-country approach was discussed. It means, a grand operation against the militants in Pakistan is on cards.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Ms. Sumaira Khan. Now, I invite Mr. Sami Yousafzai to share his views on the situation in Afghanistan.

Sami Yousafzai, journalist, and expert on Afghan affairs

Unfortunately, history is being repeated in Afghanistan. For twenty years Pakistan was either in a state of delusion or confusion that it used to think that when the Taliban [as fiends] would come into power in Afghanistan, they would not only lead Afghanistan to lasting peace but

also solve all of Pakistan's issues including the TTP and Durand Line. While President Karzai and President Ashraf Ghani were not that much interested in the Durand Line issue, the Taliban skirmished with the Pakistani border forces several times on the issue of Durand Line and in many areas uprooted the fence.

Pakistan's another problem is that it does not understand Afghanistan and the Taliban. And if it understands, it is stubborn on one thing that it can do anything there. This attitude is harmful for Pakistan.

It seems that the situation is getting very serious now. The Afghan Taliban-TTP relationship is very old. They are like a soul and body for each other – everything. While it is said that the Afghan Taliban are taking the statements of the army chief lightly, it should be known that they used to take lightly even the statements of the US president. This attitude gave the Taliban the power to force the US to accept their demands. Therefore, Pakistan should avoid using harsh tone when dealing with the Afghan Taliban. Moreover, it should be understood that no matter how weak one's neighbors are, they still retain the leverage of destabilizing their neighbors.

How can Pakistan expect clemency from the Afghan Taliban? It is true that Pakistan gave them refuge, but Pakistan was also the only partner of the US in the War on Terror from Afghanistan's neighbors.



SAMI YOUSAFZAI

Pakistan should be careful when dealing with the Taliban. It should be understood that the Taliban are no normal political force. Harsh statements from Pakistan will only trigger harsh reactionary statements from the Afghan Taliban.

Pakistan should be careful when dealing with the Taliban. It should be understood that the Taliban are no normal political force. Harsh statements from Pakistan will only trigger harsh reactionary statements from the Afghan Taliban. While giving statements, authorities in Pakistan should understand that the ruling party in Afghanistan is a military force [and not a political party] that has no kindness even for its own people. If they have no kindness for the Afghans, why would they care about Pakistan? The Taliban think they defeated the US and NATO forces and that if any neighboring country made the mistake of harming Afghanistan the Taliban will march their 2000-3000 strong suicide bombers' squad towards its border.

Pakistan should also reduce its interests in Afghanistan now. It is not good to nurture a group and use it against the opponent, and then when that group is in power in Afghanistan it is considered a puppet or treated like a vassal. Pakistan should know that the Taliban are rulers now. Therefore, a statement that Pakistan would strike inside Afghanistan is a very bad one as it is bringing a very negative reaction from Afghanistan. The Taliban in reaction would give harsher statements as they do not want to be seen as puppets of Pakistan. This is because the

Taliban face the public and many in Afghanistan think of them as Pakistan's puppets, which is a serious challenge for their reputation.

Moreover, Pakistan made the same mistake Ashraf Ghani had made in Doha. Ashraf Ghani released the Taliban prisoners, which boosted the morale of the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan also released the TTP prisoners, boosting its morale. The fall of the Afghan republic started the day it agreed in Doha agreement to release 6,000 Taliban prisoners.

There is no clear policy in Pakistan as well. It neither understands the Afghan Taliban nor the TTP. The Afghan Taliban have relocated some TTP elements to the north and south of Afghanistan. However, the problem with Pakistan is that it wants the Afghan Taliban to do everything in a single day. It takes time for issues to be resolved.

As Pakistan once used to tell the previous Afghan governments to seek solution to the Taliban problem inside its own border, now the Taliban government will say this to Pakistan for the TTP. No matter how weak a government in Afghanistan is, it can create troubles for Pakistan. The Taliban are not weak and are not a political force as well. Therefore, it is very hard to understand them.

The US-Pakistan strategic partnership is an attraction point for both the TTP and Afghan Taliban which would give them a pretext to step into Pakistan once again. This is because America is not perceived good in Pakistan and the public sentiments are against it. Therefore, partnering with the US will worsen the situation.

The TTP is a major challenge for Pakistan, however, if it approached the Afghan Taliban in a good manner some way out of current situation can be found. However, if Pakistan continued the rhetoric of striking inside Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban will then start using the TTP as a proxy in the same way Pakistan used the Afghan Taliban as a proxy against the former Afghan governments.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mr. Sami Yousafzai. Now, I invite Mufti Muhammad Qasim Haqqani to tell us about perception in Afghanistan about Pakistan, the TTP and security.

Mufti Muhammad Qasim Haqqani, central leader of JUI in Chaman

This is a reality that peace and development in Afghanistan benefits Pakistan and vice versa. Not only this, but peace in this whole region relates to Afghanistan. This is also a reality that there are many problems in Afghanistan presently, such as the ban on women education. In this ban, the chief justice of Afghanistan, the Emir (Supreme Leader) and three ministers are involved. The three ministers apparently side with the Emir because they don't want to risk losing their ministries. The rest of the Taliban leadership is in favor of 'a good' women education. In line with the decision made in Rahbari Shura and the federal cabinet meetings, a committee [on women's education] was formed nearly a year ago. The regime anticipated the committee to come up with an education system that caters to both Islamic and contemporary education needs of women. The committee was tasked to work on it. It was decided that after the system is in place, the women education will be allowed. However, now a year has passed, and nothing has come of it. Recently, the Taliban closed beauty parlors in Afghanistan, to

which 40,000 households were financially connected.



MUFTI MUHAMMAD QASIM HAQQAN

All the influential ulema from every part of Pakistan and the Pashtun nationalist leadership should go to Afghanistan and meet the Rahbari Shura and discuss the situation with them.

The TTP members used to reside in Takhta Pul district of Kandahar, as well as in [Spin] Boldak. The Taliban's supreme leader himself gave them [the TTP] 3.7 million rupees. That was because the TTP and TTA equally participated in 'jihad' against the US and have done much for each other. However, when the Emir saw that because of the TTP Pakistan's peace was getting imperiled, he has in some manner controlled them. He is now trying to gradually part his ways with the TTP. He is not acting immediately against it because he fears its fighters will join the IS-K. Another reason the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' cannot act against the TTP is that the TTP has done much for some Taliban federal ministers. They fear to act against it because they do not want a schism. However, it is expected that they will also start parting ways with the TTP.

There are some recommendations. Firstly, all the influential ulema from every part of Pakistan and the Pashtun nationalist leadership should go to Afghanistan and meet the Rahbari Shura and discuss the situation with them. Secondly, two meetings should be arranged for the ulema of both Pakistan and Afghanistan, one either in Kabul or Kandahar and another in Islamabad to discuss the situation. Thirdly, a conference should be arranged in Makkah of this region's ulema. This is because only the ulema of this region, especially of Pakistan understand the Taliban as the Taliban have studied under their tutelage. They should force the Afghan Taliban to accept the Doha agreement conditions.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mufti Muhammad Qasim Haqqani. Now, I invite Maulana Abdul Haq Hashmi to tell us about the attributes of the Pakistani ulema that could help in convincing the Afghan Taliban to accept Pakistan's demands on the TTP. Also, how effective are the other channels that Pakistan could make use of to resolve its issues?

Maulana Abdul Haq Hashmi, Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Balochistan

It seems that Pakistan's way of doing things is not good. It is more important and necessary to set one's own house in order than doing it for a neighbor. It is an old obsession of the Pakistani people to leave their own country to destruction but [try to] correct the neighbor. And this is what has prevented Pakistan from being successful. This is not the only problem [of Pakistan] that TTP is thriving in Afghanistan under the Afghan Taliban. In the prevailing sensitive situation, the Army Chief and Defense Minister of Pakistan are giving harsh statements, such as

threatening the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' that Pakistan would strike inside Afghanistan. If this is how Pakistan sees Afghanistan, then what is the difference between Pakistan and the US? While declaring the US as an invader, if Pakistan also strikes inside Afghanistan, does this leave Pakistan any different from the US?

In Pakistan too, the TTP has had strongholds which have never been permanently destroyed. Why cannot Pakistan give attention to this rather than focusing only on forcing the Afghan Taliban to tame the TTP? While the members of the TTP are roaming freely in Pakistan, are the intelligence agencies unaware of it? Why they are not being controlled? Pakistan should correct itself first then attend to the influx of militants from Afghanistan which is also its own responsibility. At present, the situation on the western border is so disappointing that the Afghans crossing from Afghanistan to Pakistan start hating the Pakistani authorities on the border.



MAULANA ABDUL HAQ HASHMI

Pakistan also needs to understand the TTP and IS-K. Although they function the same way, they are different groups with their distinct ideologies. When investigating these groups, Pakistan's agencies lack information.

Now that peace has returned to Afghanistan, why cannot Pakistan normalize its border? Even now the Afghan women and children are treated in a very inhuman way on the border by the Pakistani forces. By doing this, what kind of message does Pakistan want to convey to Afghanistan? Is this a message of love for a neighbor? In return, would the Taliban leadership love Pakistan? This is only fomenting hatred. While there are rules and regulations for borders internationally, there are no rules and regulations for the Pak-Afghan border. There is no visa system. Also, there is no functioning system on the border for those daily wagers who cross border to earn livelihood. These are the things on which Pakistan should focus.

Pakistan has failed to understand the Afghan Taliban which is a big challenge. Moreover, Pakistan's use of the same policy for every government in Afghanistan is mere foolishness. The Afghan Taliban of 1994, 2000-2004, and 2020 are not the same. However, it has been witnessed that Pakistan is using the same policy for all the different versions of the Afghan Taliban.

Pakistan also needs to understand the TTP and IS-K. Although they function the same way, they are different groups with their distinct ideologies. When investigating these groups, Pakistan's agencies lack information. They should be sensitive about the ground realities. Unfortunately, they work on the same lines constantly which is the cause of failure of both the intelligence agencies and security forces.

Mehmood Khan Achakzai suggested that Pakistan should enter a charter of peace with

Afghanistan. Nobody should refuse working towards such a charter of peace in which both the nationalists and ulema are involved, after which a conclusion that is beneficial for all can be reached.

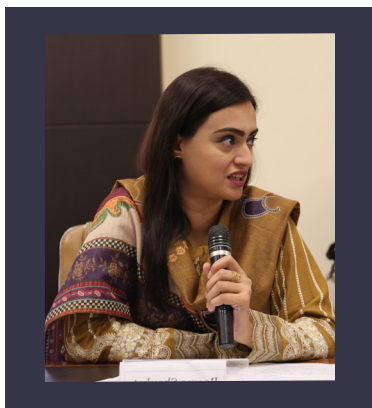
No one is trying to understand the ideological base of the TTP and Afghan Taliban. The whole problem stems from their outright refusal to accept modern democratic system. They even take it to such an extreme level that then it becomes “takfir” and those who believe in such a system or are part of it become “wajib ul qatal” or worthy of being killed. If their mindset is not changed, it is not possible to tackle the TTP issue. The role of ulema can be effective in this, especially of those ulema under whom the Taliban have studied. However, no good teacher of the Taliban has been given this task yet. In the Taliban’s view, Pakistan is a non-Islamic state and a state liable to be waged a war [jihad] against. Therefore, Pakistan needs to focus on finding a solution to this ideological issue.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Maulana Abdul Haq Hashmi. Now, I invite Ms. Reema Shaukat to share her perspective on Afghanistan.

Reema Shaukat, Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad

Pakistan and Afghanistan are both confused about understanding each other. Because of the name ‘Taliban’, the TTP is associated with the Taliban government while an interchangeable name, IEA, is also available. So, whenever there is a dialogue, it should be with the IEA and not the TTP. Therefore, there needs to be a clarification that what is the TTP and how is Pakistan interacting with the IEA. While the situation becomes chaotic sometimes, there is always some hope.



REEMA SHAUKAT

It becomes more problematic when the Afghans’ taz-kiras, or identity cards, are not even updated and their visas have expired.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are collaborating in different areas. Pakistan has a good understanding of the current economic situation in Afghanistan and is itself facing economic crisis. So, whenever delegations from Pakistan go to Afghanistan for negotiations and whenever delegations from both the countries visit each other, the discussion should be on addressing the current economic crisis. Efforts from Pakistan’s side should be in support of Afghanistan. Whether it is the TTP conducting attacks or there is involvement of IS-K and al-Qaeda, the situation remains alarming for both countries.

The coastal areas in Balochistan are very peaceful [and have had almost no presence of

Islamist militants]. However, with the announcement of provinces (wilayas) [for Balochistan's coastal and northern regions] the TTP has given an indication to increase its activities there; [in northern Balochistan it has already increased its attacks such as the Zhob attack on FC]. Will a new FATA-like region come to replace the peaceful coastal areas? The pressure is building up and the peaceful people who are facing economic problems fall prey to the militants who use them against the state.

On the Chaman Pak-Afghan border when an FC soldier has to deal with 20,000 Afghan women and children in 8 hours, how much threshold will it have? Moreover, when the Afghans' tazkiras, or identity cards, are not even updated and their visas have expired [and they do not know whether or not their tazkiras are expired], then what can an FC soldier or Pakistani government do for them [at the border]? And when a Pakistani has to go to Afghanistan, he or she faces the same troubles as are faced by the Afghans.

When Pakistan starts negotiations with Afghanistan, the TTP and other such security factors are brought forth first about which Pakistan itself has no clarification. It should be accepted that delegations from Pakistan are most of the times not much prepared to talk about the issues brought forth in discussions.

When the Taliban representatives go to Doha for talks, first they are questioned by the international media about women rights in Afghanistan and then pressed to ease restrictions on women. So, why are they not addressing the women rights issue? The Taliban said that they want to review the curriculum because a lot of content in it has come from India, and they do not want their children to be taught that stuff. A suggestion was given to the Afghan Taliban to let their female university graduates teach at their homes. Many Pakistani female graduates from Afghan universities are teaching at their homes to their female students. So, in one way or another way women education is ongoing in Afghanistan.

It was said that by fencing the western border Pakistan ended the ease in the Pak-Afghan relations, such as the people to people exchange. However, there is a positive outcome of the fencing. In a year, no major attacks occurred at the Pak-Afghan border. If the attacks have been carried out, they have either been carried out in the cities or in places which could bring some attention to the TTP.

The huge cache of weapons left by the US in Afghanistan is very much updated, such as the artificial intelligence used in them. These technologies are not with Pakistan. The weapons with 15 Pakistani forces deployed on the border are less updated than the ones that are with 7 Taliban guards on the other side of the border. They use night gaze weapons. This is challenging for Pakistan's security.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Ms. Reema Shaukat. Now, I invite Mr. Anwar Zaman Marwat to tell us about the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially Lakki Marwat.

Anwar Zaman Marwat, journalist based in Lakki Marwat

The main target of the terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the police force. The terrorists target the police because it is the force which is conducting operations against them. For the

past 7 to 8 months, terrorism has been at its peak; only from the last month, the situation has started to improve a bit. However, the resurgence in terrorism is the result of the failure of security forces.



ANWAR ZAMAN MARWAT

The main target of the terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the police force. The terrorists target the police because it is the force which is conducting operations against them.

When a terrorist activity takes place and people come out in protest against it, they are threatened by both the state and the militants. When a journalist covers militancy, he also gets into trouble. The locals have said that the militants were seen patrolling at night and the security forces would not venture to come out after nightfall.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mr. Anwar Nawaz Marwat. Now, I invite Mr. Shahzada Zulfiqar to tell us about the recent terror activity of the TTP in Qilla Saifullah, and the security situation in Balochistan.

Shahzada Zulfiqar, Quetta-based senior journalist, ex-president PFUJ

In Zhob and Qilla Saifullah, the TTP fighters entered the camps of FC and attacked in the same manner as was seen during the attacks by the militants of Baloch insurgents in Panjgur and Nushki about one and a half year ago. Militants conducted attacks on check posts on Sherani road in Zhob a couple of days ago. Afterwards, there was another attack in Zhob.

The TTP militants have started their activities in Quetta also. In November 2022, instantly after the TTP ended the ceasefire with the government a polio team accompanied by the police was attacked. In Ramadan, a special counterterrorism force, was attacked. Two days later, security forces discovered that one among the militants they killed was from Kuchlak. The next day the police went to Kuchlak but were attacked so heavily by the militants that four policemen died. The policemen said that one militant kept them engaged while the others escaped. This band of terrorists had been there from some time.

It is very hard for the security forces and the CTD to counter the terrorists until they infiltrate them and strengthen their intelligence gathering. Afterwards they can go after taking down a group. In Kuchlak, Pashtun Abad, and other areas where the language is the same and where there are people who support religious people, the TTP is supported. The CTD officials said that although they and the security forces are conducting operations against the militants, the political leadership should also play its role.

It has been said that fences have resulted in positive outcomes. However, fences are for the

common people while the militants cross the border and conduct attacks and then go back. If the fencing has indeed benefitted Pakistan, then incidents in Nushki and other areas would not have happened. The weapons that the separatists used looked like used in Afghanistan by the Afghan forces including those left by the US and NATO.

Moreover, right after coming into power, the Taliban angrily uprooted fences in many areas. The reason for their anger could have been the border trade and business because a major portion of the Afghan population does its business through Pakistan. However, in the prevailing security situation the security forces and police seem very much worried.



SHAHZADA ZULFIQAR

It has been said that fences have resulted in positive outcomes. However, fences are for the common people while the militants cross the border and conduct attacks and then go back. If the fencing has indeed benefitted Pakistan, then incidents in Nushki and other areas would not have happened.

The teachers of the madrassas where the Taliban have lived and studied are still in contact with the Taliban and have an easy access to the Taliban leadership. They could be used to change the situation to a better and peaceful one. Otherwise, the Afghan Taliban at present seem very much displeased with Pakistan. Pakistan should undertake confidence building measures with the Afghan Taliban. It should send the ulema or other influential individuals.

If bilateral relations continue to deteriorate and the situation escalates, the Afghan Taliban have a very strong tool in hand in the form of the TTP. They are now using the TTP halfheartedly, but if they started using the TTP wholeheartedly then it will become very hard for Pakistan.

Moreover, three or four years back when a vehicle was caught by the police which the Baloch militants had used was discovered to have belonged to the TTP. However, the security and CTD officials say that it is not that the Baloch militants and the TTP accommodate each other in their camps. Their nexus is limited to the planning. If one group engages the security forces, the other benefits. If in Quetta the Baloch separatists engage the security forces, the TTP benefits. They want that their energy and resources not to be wasted in one place.

In the Brahui speaking Baloch areas, such as Mastung, Kalat, and Naseerabad, the TTP manages to find shelter. The Sibi attack, in which a police convoy was targeted, and which was claimed by IS-K might have been actually carried out by IS-K. IS-K has recently claimed many attacks in Mastung also.

In the Baloch speaking areas in Balochistan, it is difficult for the TTP to find shelter. However, the killing of a teacher over blasphemy allegations in Turbat (Kech district) when he was going to attend a jirga of ulema to explain his position on the matter is a worrisome development. Some wonder if religiosity is increasing there and these [religious] actors could also merge with or start supporting the TTP.

Shafiq Mengal has made a force and said that he would fight in alliance with the Pakistani Army against those militants who are against Pakistan. This group used to have connections with the TTP. The TTP suicide bombers would come and stay with Shafiq Mengal's forces. A suicide bomber, who was captured alive, testified to this in his statement. It is possible that the two groups could again make a nexus. The state is confused as Shafiq Mengal's force was blamed for its greater involvement with other militants. However, some observers argue that the state may ignore all of it for the larger interest and keep backing the group.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mr. Shahzada Zulfiqar. Now, I invite Mr. Rasool Dawar to let us know his views about the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Rasool Dawar, North Waziristan-based journalist

Lies are told from both sides. And until lies remain lies and not changed into truths, this problem cannot not be solved. Nobody is clear even now that when is polio going to be fully eradicated. Maybe never. Likewise, terrorism is also a project without a visible end in sight.

Whenever an incident takes place, both sides try to hide the reality of the matter. Those journalists who are working in the field, laugh and say that they are lying. One dot of the story is connected to another, very different one, in a very strange manner. The liars on both sides (i.e., the government and the militants) are least concerned that somebody would discover the truth. What is told by an authentic IG, CCP and other influential, is quoted, and the news is run. But that is not the truth.



RASOOL DAWAR

A lot of things reported in the media are wrong, but everyone is following them. However, a wrong is wrong which needs to be corrected.

Similarly, when a TTP militant based in Afghanistan is asked about his whereabouts, he says he is in the tribal areas [of Pakistan]. This is again a lie. The solution of what is happening on both sides in which the masses are grinded is in telling the truth.

The border was fenced so that the terrorists do not cross over into Pakistan. Initially, the fencing was done to prevent the crossing of terrorists from Pakistan into Afghanistan and a lot of money was spent on it. It was hoped that as the fencing completes, the problem would be resolved as well. However, there is the fence, the security forces, as well as check posts and CCTV cameras, and still it is stated that terrorists are coming from Afghanistan. If they are coming, stop them. If you are not able to stop, despite all those arrangements, then there are two things. Either the militants are secretly supported and allowed to come and attack or the

security forces do not have the capability to stop them. If it is both, then both are dangerous.

Target killing is on the rise in North Waziristan where only marked people are killed, who are the best in the area. Whether they are students, ulema, or anyone who can talk are killed. Who are killing them? If they are killed by the Taliban or anybody else the state should take the responsibility of investigating the killings. At least it should try tracing the killers. Even an FIR cannot be lodged. An IG or somebody else is approached then to at least lodge an FIR. According to the 780 A act, an FIR cannot be lodged as the killed individual is the victim of a stray bullet.

A lot of things reported in the media are wrong, but everyone is following them. However, a wrong is wrong which needs to be corrected. For one, the Bajaur incident was the internal issue of JUI and IS-K which has been going on for three years.

It is also said that there is too much pressure on TTP by IEA to not claim major attacks as Pakistan then complains that the militants are crossing the border and attacking Pakistan. Now it is said, not accepted, that the TTP has made a dummy organization by the name of Tehrik -e-Jihad Pakistan that accepts the major attacks, and the minor ones are claimed by the TTP.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mr. Rasool Dawar. Now, I invite Mr. Saeedullah Marwat to share his perspective with us about the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Saeedullah Marwat, Bureau Chief of Geo News in DI Khan

There is no consistency in Pakistan's policies which affects not only Pakistan but the region as well. Basically, the word neighbor is very sweet, and a neighbor is someone supportive. However, Pakistan's neighbors are fed up with it and vice versa. Pakistan cannot change its neighbors or go elsewhere. But its relations with its neighbors including India, Afghanistan, and Iran are not good.

When a paradigm shift is to be introduced, it impacts everything. The CPEC, which has been labelled as a game changer, has visible effects on Pakistan and its policies. Likewise, if the military establishment or other influential try to bring some kind of change in the country, it will have the same effects.

The DI Khan jailbreak was denied by the ministry of interior, foreign etc., however, it was said that 16 vehicles, with men inside, came to release 25-30 individuals which they did. Before this incident, there was a two-day mock exercise conducted by the militants. The DPO of that time, Sohail Khalid, said that everything is fine, but the jail is vulnerable. On that very night the jailbreak happened and people from the jail were taken.

There is an area by the name of Kulachi in DI Khan district which has never seen rest and peace, and even today there are militants at night and deployment of security forces as well. If it is said that the incidents do not happen because of the deployment, it is correct. However, when the situation turns chaotic it would not be difficult for militants to move, target and achieve their goals.



SAEEDULLAH MARWAT

When a paradigm shift is introduced, it impacts everything. For instance, the CPEC, which has been labelled as a game changer, has visible effects on Pakistan and its policies mainly those related to security.

The army chief in a recent statement said that there is only one way out of this situation, i.e., surrender of the TTP. If this decision has been made and would be implemented, it is possible that there might be some problems for some time. However, if looked back the same elements were going to be given offices. Consistency in policies has neither been observed in Islamabad, Peshawar, Karachi, nor Quetta.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you Mr. Saeedullah Marwat. Now, I invite Mr. Anwar Bangash to let us know the situation of Kurram tribal district after the Taliban's coming into power.

Anwar Bangash, journalist associated with Khyber TV

Kurram is a sensitive area and is near to Kabul. The proposed Pakistan-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan railway line crosses through Kurram. According to the local people of Kurram, there are elements of the TTP and IS-K in the district. There is also a perception that the security forces do not tell the true story all the time.

Although many people were killed in the recent incidents or clashes in Kurram, the issue did not become sectarian. It started from the north Kurram and went down to south Kurram, and then ended. There is a strong perception among the people that the security forces themselves create such troubles, and the evidence they give for this is linked to alleged lies told by the security forces. If people like Shafiq Mengal are supported for the larger interests, what interests can be larger than the lives of the citizens? If such people are given a free hand in Balochistan, the groups like TLP and other religious groups and individuals are used [by the state], then there will be problems.

The TTP and Afghan Taliban are also religious organizations. The struggle of the Afghan Taliban was for sharia, and the same goes for the TTP. Pakistani ulema also want sharia. Therefore, when the state uses religious card for some vested interests then it goes so deep that generations are destroyed.

The Afghan Taliban are treating the Afghans cruelly. They are violating women rights and have put ban on many facilities for women. The Taliban may think this will put pressure on the international community to recognize their government, but it is proving equally counterproductive. This is happening in case of polio in Pakistan as well. Recently, in Bannu, the ulema and tribal elders said they would not vaccinate their kids for polio if their demands

were not met. It does not concern them that their children will die. Many in Pakistan think that for personal gains the whole nation can be sacrificed. This thinking needs to be changed.

Pakistan has no option to strike inside Afghanistan. However, both countries can fire mortars against each other which used to happen in Karzai and Ashraf Ghani's rule. There are reports that the emir of Afghan Taliban has said that 'jihad' in Pakistan is not justified. If Pakistan started striking inside Afghanistan, then the Taliban may sanction 'jihad' in Pakistan as well. Firing only mortars is fine but going full scale will increase troubles.

The Pakistani establishment and government, as Zabiullah Mujahid also said, should put its own house in order first. Pakistan must be clear about whether it wants to bring in sharia, democracy, or any other system. Because the TTP is using weapons for sharia, there can be people in every city and village in Pakistan who would desire sharia, and if the clergy would not do it through vote, then they would help those who can bring it through weapons. The Pakistani establishment and government should be clear that until religion is separated from the state, the problem will persist.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you Mr. Anwar Bangash. Now, I invite Mr. Ghulam Dastageer to let us know his perspective and tell us about the security situation in Peshawar.

Ghulam Dastageer, Peshawar-based journalist

The establishment's 'good and bad Taliban' narrative has now come to haunt Pakistan. The nationalist leaders had been pleading for decades not to do this as they knew the monster of terrorism would one day come to terrorize the Pakistani people. Pakistan is now reaping the 'fruits' of its own policies. Since the operation Zarb-e-Azb and the APS incident, the Pakistani Taliban have been on the run. It was very surprising when negotiations with the TTP started last year. What was the need of it? They were on the run, and operation Zarb-e-Azb, which was feared to create a backlash in North Waziristan, did not create any backlash. APS happened and then came the NAP, but no military operations were launched.



GHULAM DASTAGEER

The IS-K presence in Afghanistan is dangerous. If a nexus develops between the IS-K and TTP, the Taliban government in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan will face a lot of troubles.

The Afghans should not be taken lightly. They have fought the Soviet Union, the British, and recently the US. Pakistan is not comparable to those powers. They have also their own problems. The Afghan Taliban and the TTP have the same ideology. They have had the same objective of establishing sharia rule in Afghanistan. The TTP used to go from Pakistan and

join the Afghan Taliban in their fight against the US. They have a very strong bond which they cannot break. However, the IS-K presence in Afghanistan is dangerous. If a nexus between the IS-K and TTP becomes a reality, the Taliban government in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan will face a lot of troubles.

There are elements in the Afghan Taliban that are carrying out attacks in Pakistan. DIG Sohail Khalid recently said that the bomb blast in Ali masjid was done by a Nangarhar police official. Therefore, it is not only the TTP, but Afghan Taliban are involved. This needs to be investigated, and if it continued like this it will be a lot damaging for Pakistan. It should not be taken lightly.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mr. Ghulam Dastageer. Now, I invite Riffatullah Orakzai to tell us about the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Riffatullah Orakzai, journalist and security analyst from Peshawar

Recently, a jirga was convened in Peshawar in which the army chief was also present. In the jirga, the army chief declared that Pakistan would talk with the Afghan interim government, but not with a terrorist group. This is a new policy. However, this is strange because two years back when there was another army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the country was talking to the terrorist group and 4000-5000 of its fighters were also invited to Pakistan. The fallout of this has created problems for Pakistan.



RIFFATULLAH ORAKZAI

The policy regarding the TTP issue is also questioned a lot.

Over the last 15 years, since the formation of the TTP in 2007, Pakistani strategists repeatedly held that the TTA and TTP are two different entities – the good Taliban and bad Taliban, respectively.

Pakistan has a lot of leverage in Afghanistan, but it looks like the country does not want to use it. For the last 75 years, it was Pakistan's desire to have a friendly government in Afghanistan. The way the Taliban had come into power in the 1990s, they came into power like that again in 2021. However, everything is now different from what had been expected from the Taliban's coming into power in Afghanistan. Pakistan used to think that all of its problems will be solved; the Taliban's comeback as rulers was celebrated in Pakistan.

While it is usually the institutions that should have deep understanding and knowledge of an issue, it was journalists at that time who warned that the security situation in the two western provinces (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan) will deteriorate and the TTP attacks will increase. However, the journalists were given a shut-up call. At that time, the institutions were not accepting this at all, but the situation is now before us. This issue is not going to be resolved through war. Pakistan should not create such a situation where the Afghan Taliban

also react to it. They should be dealt with technically. If Pakistan uses force, it will create more trouble for it.

The policy regarding the TTP issue is also questioned a lot. Over the last 15 years, since the formation of the TTP in 2007, Pakistani strategists repeatedly held that the TTA and TTP are two different entities – the good Taliban and bad Taliban, respectively. Any independent observer who talked against it would be snubbed and made to face the consequences. Now, everything has been exposed. If Pakistan continues to apply the same policy, there will be a more serious fallout. Even today, it does not look like Pakistan has an Afghan policy. There is a need to revisit what has not worked.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mr. Rifatullah Orakzai. Now, I invite Mr. Farooq Mehsud to tell let us know his perspective about the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Farooq Mehsud, Tank-based journalist

Decisions are made in luxury rooms without any idea of what is really happening in the troubled areas. The decisions are made elsewhere, and opinions are also given from elsewhere. Pakistan's first agreement in 2004 with the Pakistani Taliban was done by a corps commander. Most recently, General Faiz Hameed went and talked with the TTP. That means from the very beginning the military has assumed this responsibility of making peace agreements with the militants. Civilian governments have largely remained on the sidelines. But there has not been any long-term benefit of those agreements. An operation was launched in 2009 [in Swat following a failed agreement], in which the people were displaced and underwent many sufferings. The people accepted the suffering, thinking that they would get peace eventually. However, things did not change. Then operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched, in which many people were again displaced. After the operations, the people were breathing some air of peace and could move freely to places they could not go before. Although there were problems on the check posts and some other problems, but people were discussing the aftereffects of terrorism and how to counter them, not that how will peace be brought. Many movements also rose, and many people became displeased as well. This happened because the region was almost abandoned [after operations] and people's problems were not solved.

Then Pakistan again started talking with the TTP. Those who say that the talks started with the approval of the tribal leaders and people are playing with the sentiments of the tribal people. Nobody agreed to the talks. However, some selected people were taken on board. The TTP's first demand was to be given territory in Waziristan and other areas. The tribal leaders were not even allowed to talk. Those talking were not given this responsibility by the people. In Tank, General Faiz Hameed had gathered some tribal youngsters and elders and some journalists as well. Both the youngsters as well as the elders told him on his face that they are not in this agreement and there was no need to impose TTP/terrorism on them again. However, he moved ahead with the peace agreement. In peace agreement both sides waved white flags.

The Afghan Taliban may not be in Pakistan, but those people who were involved in criminal activities there and those who had a lot of difficulties in their lives, joined the TTP in South

Waziristan. They are present there. Now, if there are 10 Taliban roaming, at least six of them would be Afghan nationals.

When Pakistan was entering into peace agreement with the TTP in Afghanistan, the person sitting in front was Noor Wali Mehsud. When reports emerged that the Afghan Taliban would not let the TTP conduct further attacks and will push them out of Afghanistan, Noor Wali went and sat in Arg Palace, and a picture was made viral on the social media. The picture was deliberately made viral which meant that Noor Wali Mehsud was sitting there, and nobody could do anything to him. [As we see now] he is present there, and the TTP fighters are there. This should be understood and accepted by both sides.



FAROOQ MEHSUD

During the peace talks, the TTP fighters openly and freely travelled back and forth. When the state was informed about their arrival and seeking extortion money from locals it was said that peace talks are ongoing. During that time the TTP strengthened in Pakistan.

It is the people of Pakistan who are facing the consequences of that failed agreement. In Kaniguram, an incident took place in which an army colonel was also injured. Then another incident happened in Ladha, and now an operation is ongoing in Shaktoi. In another incident in Tank, 3 laborers were killed. Another incident happened recently in Paniala, after which the assailants left a letter warning of further attacks. These are the fruits of that failed agreement, and these examples are only from a small area.

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Moreover, those who are acting as spokespersons of the people of tribal areas in AC rooms should also go there where the people are facing problems.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mr. Farooq Mehsud. Now, I invite Ms. Zohra Wahedi Akhtari to tell us about the women rights situation in Afghanistan. Is there any optimistic news or perspective that you would like to share with us?

Zohra Wahedi Akhtari, Afghan [women] rights activist associated with International Consensus of Women Without Borders in Pakistan

First of all, the Taliban government is not a government. It is a group that has come into power through force. Their government is not an elected government. Nobody has elected them in Afghanistan. Their government will not be recognized because since coming into power they

have almost imprisoned the Afghan women. Until and unless the international community accepts their demands, they will not let the Afghan girls/women go to school and do jobs. Hardly has any family in Afghanistan not given a martyr from its members. And there are houses in Afghanistan in which there are no men, therefore women in those houses will earn and feed their kids and secure the future of their kids. If the women are not allowed to work and earn, who will feed their kids? The Taliban have shut every door on Afghan women. It is acceptable to them that the women go and beg and sit on the roads. However, their working in organizations and going to school is not acceptable to them. Since coming into power, they have been constantly lying and saying that the school will open today, and the school will open tomorrow. These are the tactics through which they want their demands to be accepted by the world.



ZOHRA WAHEDI AKHTARI

The Taliban said the schools will be opened for girls, but when? Two years have passed. Who will give these two years back to Afghan girl students? Indian curriculum has never been taught in Afghanistan. Afghan girls used to do hijab when going to school.

The Pakistani Taliban (whose current form is TTP) were present earlier, the Afghan Taliban came later. The Afghan Taliban are the branch of the Pakistani Taliban and have gone to Afghanistan from Pakistan. In the 20 years of the republic, where were the Afghan Taliban? In Pakistan. Now Pakistan is afraid that Taliban have come into power and the TTP is coming to Pakistan. Now Pakistan has become serious in strengthening its border security. Whenever a bomb blast happens in Afghanistan, Pakistan is frightened. Pakistan should understand that when its neighbor's house is set on fire the fire will reach it as well.

Pakistan is responsible for the current situation in Afghanistan. This is because such groups were made and brainwashed here which then went to Afghanistan. They studied in madrassas in Pakistan before going to Afghanistan. Their teachers are in Pakistan. Why is Pakistan afraid now?

There is terrorism in Afghanistan, not a government. The US has itself brought the Taliban into power; the Taliban have not defeated the US. If they had defeated the US, they would not be accepting \$40 million per week from the US now. While they themselves are an American project, they still say that they have defeated the US. If the Taliban have come into power through jihad, why are they accepting the money from the US?

The Taliban said the schools will be opened for girls, but when? Two years have passed. Who will give these two years back to Afghan girl students? Indian curriculum has never been taught in Afghanistan. Afghan girls used to do hijab when going to school. And they were taught Quran and other religious books as well in schools. In the same way things are taught to girls in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and India, was taught to girls in Afghanistan. There was only

Afghani curriculum. In the name of Sharia, what does the Taliban want to teach the Afghan kids? Do they want to make them terrorists? Do they want to teach them how to use guns? Do they want to brainwash them so that when their mothers, sisters, or wives go outside, they imprison them in their houses, and beat and kill them? If Pakistan recognizes the Taliban and agrees to everything they demand, it is not going to be in a distant future that they would bring the same fate on Pakistan. Pakistan should have control over them before they create any troubles for it.

If possible, the Taliban could have also banned oxygen for women. If possible, the Taliban could enter into houses and restrict women from eating as well. They think of women as machines of making babies or future martyrs. Is it martyrdom that an Afghan kills another Afghan brother? This is not jihad, but a project in the name of Islam because the Afghans were Muslims and are Muslims. They are in no need of an organization to teach them Islam.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Ms. Zohra Wahedi Akhtari. Now, I invite Maulana Yusuf Shah to tell us that what is the TTP phenomenon and how it can be controlled.

Maulana Yusuf Shah, central secretary general JUI-S & Chairman Muttahida Ulema Board, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Everybody in Pakistan talks about the human rights violations in Afghanistan, but whatever is happening in Pakistan is either not in the knowledge of the same people or they are unable to talk about it. Pakistan is the worst example of the extent of rights violation in the world. Secondly, it is now a reality that the Taliban rule Afghanistan. They have defeated two superpowers.

Every owner knows the situation of their house better. Pakistanis should be worried about their own country. The Afghans did jihad for 40 years and sacrificed hundreds of thousands of lives. They have come into power after all these sacrifices. Cannot this question be asked from UAE? Is there democracy in UAE? Is not there the control of a family or group? Is there not same situation in Saudi Arabia? In Saudi Arabia, there are holy sites of Islam which are in control of a single family. On the other hand, the Taliban have put only a few bans on women.

To understand the Taliban and have answers to its questions, Pakistan should hold conferences with the Taliban in Afghanistan. The international community, such as NGOs, frequently travel to Afghanistan and holds talks with the Taliban. Pakistan should do the same.

What do the people mean by change? For change, two things are necessary. First is the economy and the second is peace. A country where there is peace, and whose economy is strong is successful. In China, both things are available which has raised it to such heights. These two things are necessary. In the Taliban-led Afghanistan, peace is exemplary. Although there are tribes and weapons, but there is no criminal case. In Pakistan, however, lots of criminal cases are filed in the police stations. The IEA has a stable economy as well. When Ashraf Ghani was in power and the whole world was pouring in money, the value of one dollar reached 130 afghanis but now a dollar is equal to 80 afghanis.

Terrorism is often linked to madrassas. Most observers say 'jihad' has been taught to the

Taliban by the madrassa teachers. It is wrong and unacceptable. They were forced by the circumstances when Pakistani 'statesman' General Pervez Musharraf presented Afghanistan to the West in a platter. It is obvious that there had to be a reaction to it. Lal Masjid operation was undertaken, and the reaction was certain.



MAULANA YUSUF SHAH

Terrorism is often linked to madrassas. Most observers say 'jihad' has been taught to the Taliban by the madrassa teachers. It is wrong and unacceptable. They were forced by the circumstances when Pakistani 'statesman' General Pervez Musharraf presented Afghanistan to the West.

Pakistan's intelligence system at present seems weak. As the Saudi Arabian intelligence system is strong nobody can take a wrong step or utter a word. UAE has also a very strong intelligence system. Even Afghanistan itself has a strong intelligence system. If the Pakistani intelligence system became a little active and slightly improved, neither can a Talib nor somebody from the IS-K come and conduct attacks in Pakistan.

The negotiations with TTP were underway, but [sadly] policies change quickly in Pakistan. Now, all that can be done is to demand from the Pakistani government to take the issue seriously and have some pity on the nation and end this problem. Thousands of policemen have been killed in the past two to three years alone, excluding the casualties in the past. This is a big loss for the country. Pakistan should talk with the IEA; a government should talk with a government. When the talks would be between governments and done seriously, then there would be a solution. Neither is Afghanistan Pakistan's enemy and nor are the Afghan Taliban enemies of Pakistan. They consider Pakistan as their second home, and Pakistan cannot be its enemy as well. A thousand threats can be made, but Pakistan cannot live without Afghanistan. While Pakistan has helped Afghanistan in many areas, including in the expulsion of the US, Pakistan sold much of Afghanistan as well. It had nothing else in the market at that time. The Taliban know that Pakistan sold them, and to whom, and at what price. If Pakistan has not Afghanistan with it, it has nothing else in the market. One way or another, Pakistan has to establish relations with Afghan Taliban which can be done very easily. The Taliban are honest about this, and Pakistan should also become honest and resolve this issue as it cannot be resolved just through conferences and jirgas. This is the problem of governments and will be resolved on a governmental level.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Maulana Yusuf Shah. Now, I invite Professor Salma Malik to tell us whether there is a structural reason in inconsistency in Pakistan's policymaking, and also that for how long the current policy approach can remain consistent that talks would be held with only the Afghan Taliban and not with the TTP.

Salma Malik, Assistant Professor, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad

Pakistan's biggest persisting problem has been the controversial civil-military relationship. It has affected Pakistan's foreign policy to a larger extent, and if Afghanistan is looked at in the foreign policy framework this issue is visible. It is true that Pakistan cannot ignore Afghanistan because it is not going anywhere. Nobody can wish away their next-door neighbor. If it was possible, Pakistan would have done it with India. Pakistan cannot ignore Afghanistan because people on both sides are linked ethnically and genetically. Over the past decades, rather than cashing in on things positively, Pakistan has, unfortunately, looked at them from another perspective. The main problem is that Pakistan's foreign policy is not made by those who should make it, or the foreign policy is not discussed where it should be discussed. When all the stakeholders come together and discuss the issue openly, then some deliberation can be done, and a decision can be made. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Pakistan. The civilian control over important foreign policy points regarding Afghanistan, India, US, and Russia is very less. When things are turning messy on those points, only then is the civilian leadership approached. Pakistan does not consider that it should make a holistic foreign policy.



SALMA MALIK

If Pakistan wants to help Afghanistan, it should initiate a dialogue with the Afghan Taliban and propose that it would provide them network facility and they should send their girls to smart classes while sitting in their homes.

When the system of UAE and Saudi Arabia is discussed, it should be known that Pakistan is not like them. Every country is unique with a unique structure. Those who go to Afghanistan from Pakistan, including the policymakers, say that there is greater peace in Afghanistan than it used to be in the previous regimes. Should not there be peace in Afghanistan when the Taliban have no one to fight with? Formerly, they were fighting with the US which left at last by taking the passing permit, and now Afghanistan is in the hands of Taliban with no one else to fight against. If they are going to fight the women, they are in their homes and they do not have much power.

If Pakistan wants to help Afghanistan, it should initiate a dialogue with the Afghan Taliban and propose that it would provide them network facility and they should send their girls to smart classes while sitting in their homes. Through this way can both the countries do bridge-building, which unfortunately they are not doing at present. These are the opportunities both countries can avail very easily. The ulema and those experienced politicians who have a good standing in both Pakistan and Afghanistan can play a major role in the trust-building and the issue can be solved. The girls are losing their precious education by being restricted to their homes, and this is not only the question of girls. Pakistan and Afghanistan both have nearly 50/50% male-female population ratio. If any one of the two populations in both countries

is pushed back it means that not only the current generation is being left to suffer, but the coming two generations will be retarded as well. All combined, three generations will suffer.

Dealing positively with the present, the two countries need to move ahead in [a secure and better] future. Because the Pakistani foreign policy decisions have rested in the hands of the army and the intelligence agencies and not the civilians, whenever Pakistanis think of the countries in the neighborhood their view becomes very much limited, which is only from the security perspective in which there are many inadequacies. Humans do not think only from the security angle, but the human life is comprehensive in which many things are to be looked after and many problems have to be solved. If it is said that the army is excellent in strategy, it is undoubtedly true. If the army is not good in organization and strategy, it cannot be an army then. They are dependent on good strategy, which is the work of an army. Civil life does not work like that. One can achieve a goal through strategy for a limited time, but for a long time where the people, their land, their religion, and their thought process are involved, a regimental thought cannot be established. Pakistan is not repeating the mistake for once, but again and again and constantly. Constantly committing mistakes has brought Pakistan to this juncture. If it was known that the TTP would go and then make a comeback, which misunderstanding was Pakistan in? Was there any sink hole going to be created in Afghanistan?

If Pakistan in collaboration with the US made the good and bad Taliban, the Afghans were not minors that in 1980s they joined hands with the CIA and started the Afghan jihad. We all try to put off blame from our heads, however, we all are implicated in this game. Those who benefitted from this strategy, have either passed away or become too old to remain relevant. The consequences of their actions are now faced by the current generations. To improve the situation, lessons should be learned from the past mistakes. Also, it should be seen that where the strategy would be made and how to apply it. Nobody can question sharia or religion, otherwise it would become blasphemy. This is an effective way to silence anyone. Moreover, the Taliban have now a government.

If anybody is in the delusion that the Taliban do not know politics and diplomacy, then what were they doing for so long in Doha? In Doha, they were learning diplomacy, English, and politics. And from the today's nuanced Taliban Pakistan should learn. They are doing their own work as well as teaching Pakistan lessons. Nobody should be in the delusion that these are the Taliban of the Mullah Omar era who did not even use to keep a mirror in their houses. They are doing everything. They speak English and their sons, daughters and wives do jobs. They are living abroad and studying there. The problems and bans are only for the ordinary Pakistani and Afghani child. This segregation will be in both systems until they are corrected.

If the governments in Pakistan keep changing every now and then and policies are not consistent, then there is no hope. Moreover, Pakistan is running its foreign policy from the perspective of defense. If Pakistan has to make a complete and wholesome policy it needs to consider that there is a holistic vision, like the national security policy, in which every aspect is included, including the Afghan aspect as it is very important for Pakistan. If in the future Pakistan has to collaborate with China, whether that is CPEC or anything else, it needs Iran and Afghanistan for success of that collaboration. And as Saudi Arabia and Iran have shaken hands, pressure on Pakistan has been eased a bit. Similarly, the pressure has been lifted from Afghanistan as well. Therefore, for both the countries to improve their economic life they both

would have to do this important work. Moreover, if this is looked at economically, then the issue of women and disenfranchised population can also be easily brought onboard.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Professor Salma Malik. Now, I invite the participants, mainly from media, to let us know what may be Pakistan's strategy to deal with the TTP, and what is the recommendation of media for policy on TTP and what is media's own policy on the TTP?

Rasool Dawar

At present the journalists are confused. Whatever is told to them they report it whether that is false or true. Pakistan has to make a concrete policy that could be applied and shared with the journalist community. As we are currently making only castles in the air, therefore a clear decision has not been reached on what to do and what to suggest. In a recent jirga in Peshawar, whatever was shared should have been reported by the journalists. But if for the sake of good, somebody talked honestly his name would go to another list and in future things would turn ugly for him.

Saeedullah Marwat

When the Taliban were conquering province after province in Afghanistan, Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman said that these are our people who studied in our madrassas. Now a question needs to be asked from the religious groups in Pakistan: as Pakistan is becoming gradually irrelevant, do they still consider the Taliban in Afghanistan as their own? There is another question: is Afghanistan as important for Pakistan from the strategic depth perspective as it used to be two or three years ago?

Riffatullah Orakzai

Pakistan got very late on the TTP issue. Apparently, the time to control the group has passed. Now, there is no other way than Pakistan agreeing to the demands of the TTP. What can be the policy of media and what role can it play when it has been given no value or importance in resolving this issue? Media is not even asked about in this regard and cannot even independently report on the issue.

Farooq Mehsud

Until recently TV channels in Pakistan used to openly run the Taliban's statements. Now that their statements have been banned, there are some effects of it. If Pakistan wants to build narrative against the TTP, it can. There are many activities, such as extortion and other things which the state can bring against them. However, with it the protection of journalists will come up as an issue. For instance, if a story on TTP's extortion is to be run, will the Pakistani state and its security institutions allow the journalists to report such things? The media of the TTP is faster and stronger than Pakistani media. It [TTP] sends home its narrative very effectively. The media cannot give input as is expected because it faces multiple challenges from the state's side.

Sumaira Khan

The security institutions and strategists first need to know how to sensitize the tribal belt's journalist community. This is a very sensitive chapter of Pakistan's national security, for which the journalists also need to set aside this thinking of seeking more attention than others. They have to rise above these things. It was a happy moment when the corps commander talked to all the tribal journalists. Then there are two blocs of journalists in Islamabad. One is the anchor bloc and the other one is field journalists' bloc. Moreover, when giving opinion the journalists need to respect others' opinion also. When covering the TTP, there is a need to keep reporting the facts.

Sami Yousafzai

Covering the militancy and jihadists is not an easy task. For the past 20 years there had been a greater interest of the international media in the Afghan Taliban, and they wanted to interview them. The good thing is that until now no interest has been shown by international media in the TTP. However, they have lately started taking some interest in the TTP thinking that the return of the TTP means the return of al-Qaeda. It should be clear to all that there can be no reconciliation between the Taliban and non-Taliban, whether they are the Afghan Taliban or the Pakistani Taliban. They are very rude. In Qatar they were not behaving well. The journalists should be very careful. On the Pakistani media the Taliban should not be given any coverage, because the more coverage they get the stronger they would consider themselves. Although they are running their channels and are on twitter as well, their content is very much dangerous and controversial and can influence people as well.

The Pakistani religious leaders also need to stop 'glorifying' the Afghan Taliban. What kind of peace have they brought? Peace is in graveyard as well, and there is the peace of a graveyard in Afghanistan. There is nothing in Afghanistan that can be called life. Moreover, dollar is not rising in Afghanistan because there is no business taking place in Afghanistan. If the Taliban want to make an Afghani equal to dollar, they can do it by not doing business at all. Dollars are piling in Afghanistan. While many in Pakistan state and commend that there is security in Afghanistan, one may ask that what kind of security is there. Afghanistan is a jail. As the situation is very dangerous, the journalists need to be very careful.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mr. Sami Yousafzai. Now, I invite Mr. Haroon Rashid to tell us that those freelance journalists in Pakistan who are very active on the social media and retweet statements of the Afghan Taliban, TTP, and Daesh and multiply them, can this phenomenon be stopped?

Haroon Rashid

The coverage of militants' presence and attacks needs to be rationalized. Their coverage should not be an exaggerated one. Militancy is an issue which would continue. It is not certain that whether it will be resolved in 5 years, 10 years, or 20 years. Moreover, it does not look like that a solution to this issue will emerge in the near future. The state of absolute peace is never going to be reached. There are many reasons for this.

It seems that the security pact with the US is meant to refurbish the Pakistani security forces with latest weapons. It seems that the [old] pact that remained intact from 2005 to 2020 has been renewed. It includes training the Pakistani army, among other things. The army seems to be preparing. This is a long-drawn war which it has to fight.

The media should be rationalized with proper context. The Taliban leadership's statements should come, but they should not be for creating scare. Their statements should not be covered as propaganda, but only the information part should be covered. For this, training is required for journalists, which would create media awareness. They would then be able to distinguish between the propaganda and facts. It is now a fact that Taliban are the rulers of Afghanistan, and it is correct to say that the country belongs to them. Both the USSR and US tried their might and failed, which is a reality. Undoing the Taliban government in Afghanistan will now worsen the situation rather than improve it. The logical point is that the Taliban should also be ready to listen and address the concerns of the international community. In addition, what Pakistan wants to do for Afghanistan it should do. The Taliban are engaging with the world, but no individual of the prime minister level has visited Afghanistan yet, neither from Pakistan nor from anywhere else. The level of engagement needs to be increased.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mr. Haroon Rashid. Now I invite Mufti Muhammad Qasim Haqqani to tell us that what is the legal status of the TTP as per Islamic law? Is it a terrorist group or a jihadi group?

Mufti Muhammad Qasim Haqqani

A conference was organized in Islamabad in which the ulema gave a unanimous fatwa under the leadership of Maulana Mufti Taqi Usmani. He is the ulema's torchbearer and speaks best for all. Therefore, one should look towards him in this regard.

If a unanimous final word is needed from the ulema on the TTP issue, then in all four provincial capitals, or at least in Quetta or Peshawar two conferences should be held to seek religious scholars' unanimous decision or fatwa.

Moreover, the TTP and other troubles faced by Pakistan today are because of the volatility of its policy. Pakistan's policy changes frequently. However, in other countries policies are made for 50 years or so, and to check their success repeated evaluations are done. In Pakistan, the institutions that made the National Action Plan (NAP) needs to be asked about its status. They themselves do not know.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mufti Muhammad Qasim Haqqani. Now, I invite Maulana Abdul Haq Hashmi to tell us that what is the legal status of the TTP as per Islamic law? Is it a terrorist group or a jihadi group?

Maulana Abdul Haq Hashmi

A fatwa changes with the change in circumstances, and all the muftis agree on this. The fatwa against the TTP during the presence of the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan was different. Now that there is no US and NATO in Afghanistan, the fatwa has also changed. If the solution

has to be permanent and not temporary, then the text of Paigham-e-Pakistan needs to be applied. Moreover, the policy of allowing crimes for the larger interests should be stopped. A crime should be called a crime, and decisions should be made on merit.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Maulana Abdul Haq Hashmi. Now, I invite Maulana Yusuf Shah to tell us that what is the legal status of the TTP as per Islamic law? Is it a terrorist group or a jihadi group?

Maulana Yusuf Shah

This year there was a conference in Peshawar which was attended by Maulana Taqi Usmani and a fatwa was given at the end of the conference. Afterwards 6 large religious institutes also gave a fatwa. However, the TTP has neither started their activities with somebody's fatwa, nor will it stop with somebody's fatwa.

Reema Shaukat

A lot has been talked about multilateral strategy and ulema diplomacy, but whenever the ulema go to China they tweet that this and that mosque is doing this and that work. The ulema went to Afghanistan but they did not share their input with anybody at home. Nobody knows what kind of talks took place there, what was discussed there, and whether there would be any round of dialogues in the future.

Media diplomacy, sports diplomacy, people to people contact are the things that can improve bilateral relations. When the Bajaur incident happened, rather than [merely] issuing a strong condemnation, the government should have made a strong strategy against the TTP. This is the responsibility not only of the state, but of the policymakers and scholars of Pakistan as well. The army should be used as a deterrence force and not as a policymaker. Why is it asked that when the army would make the policy will it be implemented by the civilian government? Army is for fighting wars, and when the terrorists come the army would fight them. The policymaking is the work of policymakers and civilian leadership.

Rasool Dawar

Mufti Noor Wali had requested Mufti Taqi Usmani to guide him that whether the TTP is doing jihad or not. He gave a fatwa. If the JUI-F and JUI-S scholars share that fatwa from their social media accounts that would be enough.

Muhammad Amir Rana (Moderator)

Thank you, Mr. Rasool Dawar. Now, I invite Mr. Afrasiab Khattak to conclude the consultation with his perspective.

Afrasiab Khattak, political analyst, and rights activist

Pakistan's Afghan policy is the root cause of all problems. Until and unless it is corrected, the situation will only worsen. This policy was set into action even before Pakistan came into being. Winston Churchill was the PM of England, Lord Wavell the viceroy of India, and Olaf Caroe was the governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These individuals decided that the fight with the Soviet Union will continue, and as Germany is getting defeated England has to prepare for

it for which Islam will be used as a weapon. The British tried to divide the Indian Subcontinent in the name of religion. As the five central Asian countries, and Sinkiang, Iran, Northern India, Middle East, and North Africa were all Muslims, the region needed a detonator, and the British tried to make a detonator and they succeeded.

Instantly after its establishment, Pakistan joined SEATO and CENTO. Nothing was happening in Afghanistan at that time. In 2009, Richard Holbrooke used the world Af-Pak. He said Afghanistan and Pakistan are not two, but one. When asked, why just one name, he replied that this is a single war theatre. The West hired Pakistan. It was not Pakistan's policy. It was the policy of the British and then the US. Pakistan acted only as a local contractor. They tried to hire Afghanistan as well, such as trying to cultivate Zahir Shah and Dawood Khan, but Afghanistan was not ready for it. It was not that Zahir Shah was favoring the communist bloc. He was the staunch opponent of communism. However, he used to say that Afghanistan would not become a front against its northern neighbor. They tried using various ways, such as economic aid. Zahir Shah was also invited to the US, but he said Afghanistan is not going to join CENTO. They tried for three years, from 1948 to 1950. The US floated the idea that Pakistan and Afghanistan should become a confederation, because it thought that as Pakistan is joining SEATO it would pull Afghanistan to join as well. However, Afghanistan was not ready for it.

AFRASIAB KHATTAK

Pakistan is going to reach such a point in Afghanistan that its greetings would not be returned because the non-Taliban Afghans are against Pakistan. They are not responsible for this. They say that Pakistan is leading this war.



It was Zia himself who said that Zia himself attempted a coup. He was made to attempt a coup. It was Zia himself who said that Islamization was the program of Zia ul Haq; it was a US program. It was Zia himself who said that preparing for 'jihad' in Afghanistan. Zbigniew Brzezinski called it a trap to which they brought the Soviet Union and took the Soviet Union to defeat. He came to Kurram, visited the Durand Line, and made a speech to the mujahideen. He said, "Go and fight the atheist Russians, God is with you". It was Brzezinski who made the announcement of jihad. The Americans gave money, and madrassas were established in Pakistan. After the Russian forces left Afghanistan, the need of 'jihad' apparently vanished. However, the US anticipated that jihad could also be used in the future.

The US's next fight is with China. China is a bigger power than Russia, as it is an economic superpower. The West is in decline now. Decline is a long process, which does not happen in a day. In 1916, Spangler had written a book "Decline of the West", and more than a hundred years have passed since his book was published. Decline is a gradual process. However, the US would not let go off the New World Order. It will fight. There are more British and American experts on Islam than in the Muslim nations. What did they do in the Middle East? Did not

they make the Arabs turn against the Turks?

The problem is that Pakistan's Afghan policy is made by generals. If a lawyer is taken to the operation theatre and is instructed to operate on a patient, what else can he do than killing the patient? His intentions would not be bad, but he does not know the art or that is not his profession. The generals have messed up everything. It has started from the Zia Ul Haq era and continues to this day. Every new general says that previous one was bad.

Who made the TTP? In 2003, when Mullah Omar came to Pakistan, he formed 'Waziristan emirate' and decided to appoint Jalaluddin Haqqani as its emir. This started with the signatures of the Taliban's Shura and Mullah Omar. However, a problem emerged that if this news got out to the international newspapers, such as the New York Times, that Afghans have made an emirate on the other side of the Durand Line then the Durand Line dispute will be questioned. So, the decision was withheld. However, in 2007 they realized that as NATO and the US were increasing their army in the region, the Afghan mujahideen would [need to] go to Pakistan because they could not live in Afghanistan. Then Pakistan got worried how to accommodate them, so they said that those Pakistanis who are with them should have a separate organization of their own. They made it, and the Pakistani army handed over the tribal districts to the TTP. An operation was launched against Mullah Fazlullah, but how he escaped it? Who caught Faqir Muhammad? Is there anyone from the TTP that the Pakistani army has caught or killed? There was no policy to kill them. They were given districts, and they became the hosts of the Afghan Taliban. They used Pakistan as a launching pad for their insurgency in Afghanistan. For 14 years, on televisions it was repeatedly said that the Taliban have one organization, one ideology, and only one emir to whom all have made their allegiance and taken an oath. Then how can there be two organizations? It was then said that the TTP is agent of RAW and NDS, and the Afghan Taliban are mujahideen. This is a lie and a double game. Is the Pakistani army playing a double game with its own people and country? Everything has been exposed now.

General Asim Munir went to Peshawar and made a speech to a jirga that for ex-FATA a separate secretariat would be made. This means accepting half of the TTP's demand. How can there be two secretariats in one province? If they are playing the game, then the game would also be played with them, and it would not end. General Faiz Hameed did it another way, and the current army chief is doing it in a different way. They are doing differently, but the game is the same. And the game was neither of Faiz Hameed and is nor of Asim Munir. This is the game of the US. The Taliban would come to Pakistan as well. The whole story is how to stop CPEC. Ten years ago, it was unthinkable that somebody could stop the CPEC in Pakistan because PML-N, JUI-F, PPP, and ANP were in its favor.

[Let me share] two things about Imran Khan's government. First, CPEC was stopped, and second, IMF came in again. IMF is that hand of the West which is strangling Pakistan. The IMF has instructed Pakistan that a transaction of even a rupee with China should also be reported to it. A new war is starting, i.e., war on terror 2. The first war on terror increased terrorism. Let us see what this 2nd war on terror brings about. The relocation of the TTP to Pakistan is also part of the game.

The biggest problem in ex-FATA is the army control of the administrative institutions and offices. This needs to be stopped. Why are they not letting the police and district administrations

work? Demilitarize the region and the whole problem will be solved. The Pashtuns are against terrorism, the evidence of which is the continuing protests. Not even five people are in favor of terrorism. The problem is for the state to change itself and its policy. Pakistan's policy should be to keep good relations with the neighbors and change its policy regarding Afghanistan. It should announce that it had used a wrong policy for the last many years. Pakistan wants to make governments in Afghanistan. This policy should stop.

Pakistan is going to reach such a point in Afghanistan that its greetings would not be returned because the non-Taliban Afghans are against Pakistan. They are not responsible for this. They say that Pakistan is leading this war. Now, Pakistan has started fighting with the Taliban as well. Eventually, the whole Afghanistan will turn against Pakistan and there will be nobody there in its favor. Therefore, Pakistan should change this policy. Pakistan should say that it supports Afghanistan will not support or shelter anti-Afghanistan elements.

The fight with the Taliban is not that they have a different ideology. Everyone has the right to have their own ideology. But if the Afghan people had voted for them and they had attained power that way it would not have been a cause for worry. Ashraf Ghani and Hamid Karzai preferred asking the Afghans.

It seems that the Taliban government would not last long because of several things. First thing is their rigid ideology. When an ideology becomes rigid, it becomes dangerous. For example, making a theocratic system in the 21st century when it has no currency. The Afghan Taliban say it openly that suicide bombing is the centerpiece of their ideology, and they want to be called a state as well. Suicide bombing states are not possible in this age. The second thing is gender apartheid – casting the women out of every profession in Afghanistan. This is not possible. It means they have separated them from men in everything except the graveyard. The third thing is the Taliban's nexus or alliance with terrorist groups. Do the Afghan Taliban think that they will be a government as well as in brotherhood with the terrorists? This is not possible. They say it with great pride that they did not give up on Osama Bin Laden. The fourth thing is the hatred for the non-Taliban Afghans. The Taliban are in some sort of enmity with them. They have made such an individual the minister of education who talks against education the whole day. How is this possible? If there is no doctor, and other professionals, who will run the country? The ulema could guide them and show them the right way. The Taliban setup will not survive for long because they have kept out the non-Taliban Afghans from everything. The fifth thing is that the Taliban have not achieved internal legitimacy. Two years have passed, which is a very long time. Neither they did a jirga, held election, nor used any other method that could show that their government enjoys the support of Afghans. They are not concerned about it. They think that weapons are enough. Holding power through weapons can continue for some time, but not forever. The last thing is about their international ties, for which they did not take the Afghans into confidence. For instance, what were the secret documents in Doha agreement? Could they explain the \$40 million the US is giving to them per week saying that both will fight the IS-K together? Is it not strange that the Taliban got 'freedom' from the US and then instantly joined it in war against terrorism. Even the Taliban's communications with Pakistan are looked at with suspicion by the common Afghans.

