

## **Complex Regional Dynamics: Pakistan need for Political Paradigm shift**

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### **Abstract**

*Since the beginning of war on terror world has realized not only the geo-strategic importance of Pakistan but also the fact that it can play a decisive role in bringing end to this war for good. Mean while with every passing day regional dynamics are becoming more intricate and complex, therefore new challenges have emerged. Hence in order to deal with them Pakistan requires extensive preemptive pragmatic approach. In war on terrorism Pakistan became an important US ally and got this natural edge over India by being the neighbor of Afghanistan. With the imminent US exit from Afghanistan and emerging India-Afghanistan nexus, Pakistan is pondering over to make much needed political paradigm shift which would bring long term internal stability and would lessen the involvement of non-state actors in damaging the internal and external security configurations of Pakistan.*

**Key Words:** Geo Strategic, Terrorism, Non-state Actors, Politics, Taliban, Engagement.

From 2001 to 2014, the region of South Asia has witnessed several changes ranging from harsh natural calamities, mounting economic crunches, changing security paradigm and above all the birth of new forms of terrorism. Moreover in general a new sense of insecurity and uncertainty has also prevailed across all the nations of South Asia. Although Global War on Terror is being fought on the western neighbor of Pakistan i.e. Afghanistan, however ironically the main protagonist and sufferer in this war has been the non-NATO ally of USA i.e. Pakistan. However even after a decade of war the victory of USA in Afghanistan is yet to be seen even though a lot of al-Qaeda recruiters and fugitives have been arrested or killed but the peace in war torn country of Afghanistan seems like a distant dream. On the other hand, Pakistan is slipping in a deep quagmire day by day and hopes for peace in this war affected country is nowhere to be seen.

The biggest challenge faced by Pakistan since 2010 is to deal with the domestic pressure of curbing the terrorist activities and radical elements and the international demands of controlling the cross border terrorist infiltration from Afghanistan and to participate more actively in war on terrorism. Though Pakistan has been fulfilling its part of the deal nevertheless it has ended up making more enemies than friends not only domestically but also on the regional front. Despite of all the sacrifices, losses and adversities, the master

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mind of war i.e. USA is not appreciating efforts of Pakistan which in turn has created ill feeling among the general masses of the country. Likewise USA is also experiencing criticism at the domestic level as its never ending war against the indiscernible enemy is taking its toll on the economy of the sole super power, thus creating problems not only for its homeland but also for the world at large. Therefore, it can be stated that USA war on terror has brought down the economic system which has been established by USA over the years. After experiencing severe economic recession, bankruptcies and stock crashes, President of United States of America has announced an exit strategy from Afghanistan in 2009. According to him USA troops will leave this region partially or completely by the year 2014.

Year of 2011 begins with a relatively peaceful world as compared to the decade of 2001-2010, due to several *raison d'être* USA strategic policies met with success and failures in this period of ten years. Naveed Mukhtar narrates many factors that might be responsible for the failures of USA policies. According to him "the world order is made up of multifaceted, adaptive, and open system that cause difficulties and at times prevents USA strategies designed to attain positive results" (Mukhtar, 2011). USA policies vis-à-vis war on terrorism in Afghanistan did not yield much desired results because of the centuries old traditional tribal set up as well as the heterogeneous compilation of society. Above all the direct and indirect involvement of regional forces in Afghanistan is also considered as a significant factor that is interrupting any achievements in the domestic front. Under the stalemate circumstances in Afghanistan, USA exit strategy seems to be the best possible solution for the face saving of USA as well as to end the war on terror for good.

### **Exit Strategy of USA from Afghanistan**

Now stage is set for a beginning of new era in war on terror. With every passing day USA is seemed to be having an urge to pack up their bags and leave this ever increasing complicated region on immediately and permanent basis as this war is suffocating the economic, social and security wellbeing of global world at large. Therefore, President of United States said in an interview "there needs to be an "Exit Strategy" for Afghanistan so that USA policy does not appear to be in perpetual drift" (Katzman, 2009). USA President Barak Obama has severe domestic pressure from the USA population who now takes this war as more of a burden and a futile activity in which ironically more USA have died as compare to previous military ventures of USA. For that very reason an exit strategy road map has been given by the USA President as stated by Waqas Sohrab and Ishtiaq Ahmad Choudhry "with the start of 2011, USA forces will embark on to withdraw from Afghanistan and this pullout of forces will be completed by 2014" (Sohrab &

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Choudhry, 2012). The exit plan of USA is of paramount importance as this step would be having far reaching consequences for the region of South Asia.

With the explicit announcement of the exit strategy of USA from Afghanistan, now there are little doubts in the mind of political analysts and political thinkers regarding USA strategy vis-à-vis Afghanistan. USA is no more playing a gullible role but now is actually wrapping up its war on terror and is now looking for a smooth transfer of power to Afghan democratic government. However according to Vicent Morells ISAF has number of pivotal duties to fulfill before their departure from Afghan region. These are as follows

1. To give training to the local Afghan army and police.
2. To make judiciary strong and independent institution.
3. To develop free market system.
4. To maintain strong and powerful government in Afghanistan which would be powerful enough to curb the narcotics activities.
5. Above all to contain and suppress the force of Taliban completely. (Morells, 2009).

The fulfillment of these above mentioned steps are prerequisite for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. On the contrary, if USA and NATO forces leave Afghanistan without the given treatment than the canvas is ready for reliving the history of Soviet Afghan War which not only resulted in civil war among Afghan warlords but has also put Pakistan in a very precarious situation. With the rising security concerns of Pakistan regarding Afghanistan and amid USA exit plan, the situation can turn either way i.e. a peaceful Afghanistan resulting in stable Pakistan or an anarchic Afghanistan following on to a volatile Pakistan.

### **Power Game in Afghanistan**

After a decade long war in Afghanistan there is no peace to be seen in war torn country. Afghans are more vulnerable as ever before with the democratic government of Hamid Karzai having no authority or rule of law beyond Kabul. Tribal chieftains are still holding strong fiefdoms and cold war is going on between them regarding distribution of power as well as to get as much power as possible to rule Afghanistan. The rugged mountainous country is devastated and ruined during the ongoing war between USA and duo of Taliban and al-Qaeda men. Even the death of Osama bin Laden and other important operatives have severely damaged the working of al-Qaeda but it is still intact and is pursuing their lethal aims and destructive objectives. Ironically now al-Qaeda is not the only enemy in this war but new terrorist organizations, activists, and non-state actors has also emerged not only in

Afghanistan but also in Pakistan, thus disrupting the democratic process in both countries. With the exit strategy plan is about to come reality in no time, the question that arises is whether Afghanistan is ready to stand on its own feet? According to International Crisis Group Asia Briefing “exit from Afghanistan in an expedite manner would not help the Afghans as well as the threats posed by the breakdown of the Afghanistan could become a reality thus creating dire consequences in the form of rising grave regional and global security concerns” (Afghanistan: Exit vs Engagement, 2010). Moreover the traditional tribal set up is ready to replace weak democratic system in Afghanistan as soon as USA leaves the region; consequently there are ample chances of history repeating itself in creating the politically fragile and socially weak Afghanistan in the absence of USA/Nato forces which would be dealing with civil wars and massive killings.

Although democratic government is installed due to USA efforts at large but local people of Afghanistan are not ready for such transition. Afghanistan has century's old tribal system that still exists in Afghanistan with its hard core values and customs which has sustained the period of British Great Game and has survived the shocks of Soviet invasion. Change in fragmented political and complex social set up will take probably another century if Afghan's have a will to change. In addition country has heterogenic society which does not allow foreign presence in their soil. Therefore no matter how hard USA try to help Afghanistan to get on its feet, until and unless local people raise above their petty interests and work for the betterment of their country, a progressive and modern Afghanistan is a distant dream.

#### **President Hamid Karzai Government**

Currently Afghanistan is going through tough times with terrorists attacks, suicide bombings, cross border terrorists assaults, military operations by ISAF/Nato forces and above all the death toll of military personnel and civilians has increased threefold since the beginning of war on terror. Joint Chief of Staff Chairman Admiral Mullen stated that “I am not sure we are winning: in Afghanistan” (Sohrab, Choudhry, 2012). With this statement it can be opined that military solution of Afghanistan does not seem to be working. On the other hand President Karzai government is incapable to perform in the absence of USA forces, thus weak center is also creating grave problems as it has failed to have a strong control on the periphery resulting in the ample chances for Taliban to fill the gap left by the center.

What USA has failed to address is the incompetent officials and administrators working in the local government of Afghanistan. The task of governing Afghanistan is not a simple task because of the heterogenic and tribal nature

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of its society and lack of social cohesion with internal unrest and threats. Since there is no concept of local government system in Afghanistan, therefore under such conditions keeping things normal in Afghanistan is a herculean task which cannot be performed by its capital Kabul only. Despite the financial assistance from the international community which could play a significant role in the process of state building, institution building and in training the local security forces, unfortunately war torn country is far from walking on the path of prosperity and growth. After the first Bonn conference, USA has been helping and supporting the local political system to transform itself into a democratic political system by equal participation of local people for electing their representatives through elections. However the most recent elections of 2009 are considered to be rigged and fraudulent which has brought President Karzai back to power. Karzai is losing its control and is taken as an USA stooge by the local Afghans, thus it seems that Karzai's time to rule Afghanistan will end as soon as ISAF/Nato forces leave this region.

### **Re-Emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan**

War on terrorism has ousted Taliban from the political picture of Afghanistan but it could not erase the presence of Taliban. As a strong ethnic Pashtun group, it has strong affiliation with the people living inside and outside Afghanistan. Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan has not only provided safe sanctuary to them but has also supported the Taliban's covert attacks in their native country because of the same cultural values and social norms. The weak government of President Hamid Karzai turned out to be an advantage and served to Taliban's interest as what President Karzai has failed to deliver to common man, that justice, fairness and equality is being promised and delivered by the Taliban. At present, Afghans are looking for alternative sources which can provide them their rights, generate sources of income and bring their life to normalcy. President Karzai's government is being accused of massive corruption and dishonesty which is utterly not acceptable to the general masses of Afghanistan. Furthermore foreign presence in Afghanistan is also responsible for re-emergence of Taliban in the social and political arena and most importantly according to Beth Cole and Catherine Morris, when these "international intruders turn out to be disappointing" (The Situation in Afghanistan: A Re-evaluation Needed, 2007) in providing the basic necessities of life. As a consequent, instead of progress in the internal security and socio economic conditions, the country is witnessing major decline in their graph of growth statistics. Likewise if current chaotic, fragile and unstable domestic situation continues to prevail in war torn country than pashtun ethnic group of Taliban could have the edge over the government of President Karzai and in no time they would be seen in the power circles in coming years.

## **Presence of Multinational Global Actors in Afghanistan**

From centuries Afghanistan has been witnessing the presence of international actors on its soil. It has played the role of battle ground for super powers ranging from times of multi-polar to bi-polar and Uni-polar world. Moreover from time to time mountainous country has seen power tussle between Great Britain, Russia, USSR and USA but it has never welcomed the presence of foreigners on its land. Afghans are too proud to be ruled by the foreign forces. Besides this fact, Afghanistan has its ample share of foreign influence and alien presence on their land. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century proxy wars have been waged on this unfortunate land as well as it is being used as buffer state by super powers. The geographic location of Afghanistan is primarily responsible for its significance and sensitive circumstances as it is engulfed by major nuclear states of Pakistan, India, China with Iran and Central Asian States of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Above all since the beginning of war on terrorism, presence of USA and ISAF forces which includes more than forty countries under its umbrella are operating in Afghanistan as well as influence of its neighbors in internal matters cannot be ruled out, thus creating an atmosphere of insecurity, susceptibility and vulnerability not only for locals but also for other regional actors particularly for Pakistan. Therefore problems in Afghanistan can be regarded as multifaceted and multidimensional where multiple actors can be held responsible.

## **Complex Regional Dynamics and Drama**

Currently neighboring countries of Afghanistan are trying to get maximum leverage in the affairs of Afghanistan. With the execution of USA exit plan is expected in 2014, the regional actors have become more active and are now covertly and overtly seeking more strategic gains and economic profit from the current Afghanistan quagmire. On the contrary since 2001 the extensive presence of USA is creating more ambiguity in the minds of regional actors of the hidden motives of the sole super power. As far as China Iran and Russia are concerned their governments are feeling discomfort at the presence of USA in Afghanistan though with the exit plan in sight they are still not sure of the ulterior agenda that USA is or will be pursuing. Therefore these three countries are adopting "cautious allies approach in Afghanistan" (Garrigues, 2013). Furthermore the mounting involvement of India in their decade's old ally is also creating suspicions and doubt in the minds of other regional countries. Moreover the growing relations between India and USA are raising several eyebrows in general but particularly Pakistan is feeling at loss. Presence of India in Afghanistan whether India is engaged in either development projects or in providing aid in social, social and economic sector but its role in any form is definitely not serving the interest of Pakistan. It is

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opined in an article in CSS analyses in Security Policy as "India will keep on giving generous aid to Afghanistan but more for opposing and countering Pakistan instead for bringing peace and stability in Kabul" (Last throw of the dice? USA strategy in Afghanistan, 2009) thus, both players are ready to play their favorite game of blame game, hence creating more drama in the regional complexity of south Asia.

#### **Rising Security Threats at Domestic Front of Pakistan**

War on terrorism has placed Pakistan in a precarious situation where domestically it is confronting indigenous terrorists and on the other hand it is having difficulties in persuading the world of its objective role in war on terror. With the announcement of exit plan of USA from the region of South Asia, stage is set for a new change; whether this change will bring chaos or peace, it is yet to be seen. Under the changing circumstances and upcoming events, Pakistan would be having a significant responsibility i.e. to keep itself protected against the multifaceted security threats originating from the regional developments as well as to play a positive and objective role in bringing peace and tranquility in the region.

Since 2001, Pakistan has been actively participating in an overwhelmingly USA war that is being fought in its western neighbor of Afghanistan. It has provided all forms of assistance to the sole super power ranging from military, physical, intelligentsia and logistic support just to keep itself protected against the USA rage and wrath. Unfortunately in fighting someone else's war, Pakistan failed to notice the repercussion, spillover and consequences of an unending war on its own internal and external security. With every passing day from the fateful event of 9/11, Pakistan is falling deeper into a mess which has now becoming impossible to contain, clean and deal with. From the birth of Pakistan, it has been paying the price of others fault particularly in case of Afghanistan. Close geographical proximity with Afghanistan has given much trouble to Pakistan instead of some peace because any happening in Afghanistan has direct impact on the socio-economic fabric of Pakistan.

War on Terrorism is not helping Pakistan in making friendly relations with its western neighbors. Though Pakistan is not directly fighting in Afghanistan but without the active involvement of Pakistan it would have been difficult for USA to wage war against Taliban ruling in Afghanistan. Therefore Pakistan is a part and parcel in this war against the terrorist factions. As war has entered in its second decade, the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are still revolving around skepticism, adventurism and distrust and can be well defined as two individuals stuck in a bad marriage. Despite the fact that people of both countries enjoy good and friendly relations with each other for decades but

most of the time local people override government policies and pursue their own interests and socio cultural values. For instance, after the defeat of Taliban/al-Qaeda forces by the coalition forces, the remnants of Taliban/al-Qaeda men took refuge in FATA region of Pakistan against the state policy, thus started a period of internal chaos and disorder for Pakistan.

### **Deep Infiltration of Taliban in Karachi**

For more than a decade Pakistan is facing worst kind of terrorist attacks including suicide bombing, attack on army personnel and official buildings. Besides military operations in FATA areas, there is no stop to terrorist's activities in the country. Ironically the Afghan Taliban have succeeded in getting favor from the local resulting in new factions of Taliban naming Punjabi Taliban residing in southern Punjab and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) operating from North Waziristan which has increased the threat dilemma manifold. Therefore Pakistan is fighting an enemy which has penetrated deep into its society including economic hub of Karachi. Ironically the metropolitan city which is the largest city of Pakistan where multi-races people are residing including a large segment of Pakhtoons, which came as a refugee after the first soviet afghan war, who have now settled there as nationals of Pakistan. Currently Taliban are reaching all the outskirts of Pakistan, Karachi is not an exception and unfortunately it has become a new refuge for the Taliban as no one can differentiate local Pakhtoon from a Taliban. Day to day target killing and bomb blasts provide ample evidence of the presence of a grave danger that is looming inside the city, as Shermeen Obaid Chinoy reported in a short documentary "Karachi is now an urban front in the war against the Taliban" (Chinoy, 2009). By one way or another war on terrorism has grimly affected all of the country, but Karachi has been most terribly affected by this never ending war against an invisible enemy. The increasing presence of Taliban has ignited power tussle inside Karachi between local political party of Muthahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and the Pakhtoons. Due to the presence of Taliban in Karachi, it naturally means supporting local Pakhtoons against any form of high handedness, thus creating an atmosphere of insecurity, anarchy and mayhem, hence creating more troubles for the already troubled democratic government of Pakistan.

### **Surfacing of Punjabi Taliban in Punjab**

Punjab is heavily populated province of Pakistan and much of the socio-economic, cultural and political activities are taking place in this province. The capital of country is also situated in this province i.e. Islamabad. War on Terrorism has affected the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa immensely but now rest of the provinces of Pakistan is also feeling the shocks. After the



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incident of Jamia Hafsa in Islamabad, terrorist activities increased manifold in the major cities of Punjab including Lahore and Rawalpindi. Ironically Punjab has now become not the lone sufferer of terrorist activities but it is also taking part in generating and breeding terrorist networks and activities.

The region of Southern Punjab is witnessing the emergence of supporters of movement of Taliban in the form of Punjabi Taliban. According to Mehboob Qadir "Punjabi Taliban constitute of more than 37 groups including 24 groups of those militant organizations that were active in Kashmir and Afghanistan. Among these 12 groups are from Punjab, 4 from Karachi, one each from Baluchistan, Kashmir and Islamabad and 2 from KPK. Furthermore more than 13 new terrorists' organizations resulted because of Pakistan participation in war on terror and military operations in Swat and Red Mosque (Qadir, n.d). Previously Taliban is carrying out terrorist activities in Pakistan and across the border, which is predominantly based on ethnic group of Paktoon. Since the beginning of war on terror, Pakistan is facing the birth of strong indigenous force that is toeing the line of Taliban and wanted to bring strict Islamic laws in the country on the same grounds as it was during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Punjabi's are the strong ethnic group of Pakistan and their deep indulgence and interaction with the Pakhtoons Taliban is not a good sign. Ahmed Rashid gives a new name to the group of Taliban as "multi-ethnic group" (Yousafzai, n. d) thus revealing the changing nature of grouping of Taliban in the aftermath of War on Terror. USA war in Afghanistan which ignited the militant, confrontational and aggressive movement against the attackers in general but particularly against Pakistan is now entering in a new dimension where it is no more confined to areas of FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhawa with Pakhtoons as the main protagonist but now there is a strong presence of Punjabi's as well.

#### **Militant Punjabi Groups gathering under the Umbrella of Punjabi Taliban**

Poverty plays a pivotal role in generating harmful elements in a society. When state fails to provide basic necessities to its citizens then non-state actors gets the chance to fulfill the empty space. Pakistan is a poor country where state is not carrying out its responsibilities completely, poverty is widespread and corruption is rampant. Traditionally madrassa has been performing the duties of state i.e. of providing education, shelter and food to the poor and needy. At present a large number of madrassa's are working in Punjab, helping the poor living in the province particularly in southern Punjab. After the first Afghan Soviet War, madrassa's were primarily used to recruit fighters for the holy war against the Red Army. These recruiters were given professional training by the Intelligence agencies and other involved intelligentsia so as to wage guerilla war on the Russian forces. After defeating the red army, these fighters

did not end their mission of fighting the infidels or to help the Muslims from all over the world particularly that of the Kashmir's mujahideen against the Indian occupation of their homeland. After the first Soviet Afghan war the traditional role of madrassa's were changed for forever and now they are being excessively used for recruiting fighters for multiple causes. Ironically at that time Pakistan did not pay much heed to the Frankenstein that they had created because of the myth of getting strategic depth in Afghanistan and in helping the Kashmir's for their just cause of getting their independence from India. Pakistan establishment had never actually thought for once that their creation could backfire and these fighters could actually become a menace and security threat for the very existence for Pakistan. Previously trained by the most esteemed intelligence services of Pakistan are now causing much frustration and insecurity for their creators.

### **The growing force of Punjabi Taliban in Southern Punjab**

Taliban were the force created and backed by the Pakistan's intelligence services with the aim of having an influence in the domestic politics of Afghanistan and to get strategic depth vis-à-vis India. After the USA attack on Afghanistan, the clandestine agenda of Pakistan met with a severe blow as Taliban preferred to side with al-Qaeda and Pakistan was left with no choice but to become part of the coalition forces that attacked the perpetrators of 9/1. Taliban was no match and started to flee their country as USA coalition forces were advancing in Afghanistan. Taliban were not the only one fighting in Afghanistan but there was a large share of fighters from Pakistan also. People from all over Pakistan went to Afghanistan to fight against the coalition forces and then returned back to Pakistan. The border forces did succeed in capturing al-Qaeda escapees but let the Taliban and others a safe entry into FATA. As narrated by Frederick W. Kagan, Ahmad Majidyar "in 2001, after the fall of the Taliban regime, instead of putting a stop to the return of fighters from Pakistan, government sanctioned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) fighters to return to Pakistan. After returning LeJ set up a major training base in Muridke, Punjab which was located alongside the Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT) headquarters" (Kagan &Majidyar, 2009). This sowed the seed of a growing force of extremist, militants and enemy of the states.

While talking about Punjabi Taliban, the southern part of Punjab is of paramount importance. It underdeveloped and backward where feudalism is in charge of domestic affairs and the only rule prevalent there is that of might is right. The backwardness of the locals provided ideal conditions for the non-state actors to exert their influence and recruits local. Banned organizations of Jaish-e-Mohammad, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e Taiba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi were already operating in Punjab with changed names when Taliban

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and al-Qaeda fighters fled FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in wake of military operations. Thus a new chapter begins in war on terrorism when Taliban got new supporters and followers which came to be known as Punjabi Taliban. According to Faisal Aziz “these militants belong to the banned organizations of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Sipah-e-Sahaba that was long sponsored by Pakistan’s powerful, strong and influential military and intelligence establishment. At present these assemblage of militant organizations are acting against the interest of Pakistan, solely because of the rising influence of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its ally al Qaeda” (Aziz, 2010). The emergence of Punjabi Taliban under the umbrella of these militant organizations is creating a situation which has raised severe security concerns for Pakistan. The terrorist attacks by Punjabi Taliban in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad have highlighted the grave danger that Pakistan is moving forward to; hence a new enemy, threat and rival is born not from the west but from the heartland of Pakistan i.e. Punjab.

#### **Role of Punjabi Taliban in the aftermath of USA Exit from Afghanistan**

The deepening relation between Taliban, TTP and Afghan Taliban with Punjabi Taliban is raising eyebrows throughout the international community. Any understanding between these militant organizations can lead to horrendous events and mass destruction not only in Pakistan but also in Afghanistan. Besides the untiring efforts the government of Pakistan is not able to control the unlawful activities of these militant organizations in addition to the fact that their followers are increasing day by day. Since the first invasion of Afghanistan by the super power of Russia during the cold war and USA also getting involved in the rugged mountainous country at the beginning of the twenty first century, being its neighbor Pakistan was reluctantly caught up between the cold war rivalry of the two super powers followed by the coalition forces attack on Afghanistan, thus ending up fighting someone else’s war and afterwards cleaning the mess and disorder created by the fighting and exiting forces. Ever since Pakistan fate was changed and it entered into an endless identity struggle. Now stage is set for another change that is on its way in the destiny of Pakistan following the exit of USA forces from Afghanistan in 2014. Several questions are being raised regarding the role of multifaceted and multi ethnic Taliban residing in Pakistan and Afghanistan once USA leaves this region.

At present internal security in Pakistan is very fragile and vulnerable where multiple factors are active in creating commotion and instability, thus showing their presence in a volatile way. Taliban from various back grounds are preparing for a new development in Afghanistan that will bring several indigenous and international forces in action for gaining power and influence

in war torn country. TTP and Punjabi Taliban who are supporting Afghan Taliban are also preparing in the same context as a huge political vacuum is expected to be created after the exit of USA forces that could lead to a new civil war. According to a new report in The Washington Post “several training camps are being built in Punjab by dozens of domestic militant groups and they are planning for a massive civil war in Afghanistan after the exit of Western forces in the coming year” (Butt, 2013). Moreover late Hakimullah Mehsud stated that “before, they were keeping a low profile but just in the last two or three years hundreds have been coming from Punjab, Everyone knows that when NATO and the USA troops leave Afghanistan there will be fighting between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns”(Pakistan militants preparing for Afghanistan civil war, 2013). Hence, the growing network of TTP and Punjabi Taliban not only has a deep impact on security of Pakistan but it is creating serious challenges across the border as well.

### **Importance of Pakistan’s role after USA exit from Afghanistan**

USA is preparing for the final draw down in Afghanistan which leaves Pakistan in a very peculiar situation of making wise decisions regarding their future role vis-à-vis Afghanistan. At present Pakistan is dealing with the worst form of terrorism on its soil where not only domestic terrorists organizations are working but international terrorist’s networks are also operating. This frontline state in war on terror has their hands full with domestic problems regarding security, political, economic and social issues and it is in no position to deal with any issues that will arise in its land locked country neighbor. However, the biggest point of concern is how to deal with the power vacuum that might generate once USA forces leaves Kabul.

Pakistan has deep socio cultural ties with its neighbor and has strong ethnic attachment with the Pashtun of Afghanistan. It has been home to thousands of Afghan refugees since Afghan-Soviet War and has been playing an active role in the rehabilitation efforts after the USA attack on its western neighbor. Ironically the consistent efforts from Pakistan are seen with more suspicion rather than being appreciated by its neighbor and the international community. Nevertheless Pakistan has a significant role to play in the coming times which is very critical for peace and stability in the region of South Asia.

Pakistan is the only country in the world that is well aware of the geography, cultural values, mores, demography and the psychology of the Afghans. Therefore willingly or unwillingly the international community cannot bypass Pakistan while formulating some future plan for peace in Afghanistan. As illustrated by Imtiaz Ali in an ISPU report “Washington has realized that Pakistan has to be taken on board while finding a solution, otherwise it will

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keep on being part and parcel of the problem” (Ali, 2012). However, peace is a word that is unknown to Afghans since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Foreign forces are primarily responsible for the chaos and tumult in Afghanistan though Afghan tribal chieftains are also to be blamed for pursuing their vested interests rather than what’s best for their country.

### **Indian Factor**

Since the birth of Pakistan, most of its foreign policy making revolves around dealing with the threat emanating from its eastern border. India has always played the role of an arch rival and never missed any chance of harming the national interest of its neighbor. In the region of South Asia, Pakistan considers India as the only enemy existing and has developed paranoia over the decades resulting from the three wars that have been fought between these two countries in the short span of time. Border skirmishes happen very frequently and there is always a chance of full scale war breaking out between these two nuclear states. South Asia has become a nuclear flash point and the most dangerous and volatile place of the world.

India is the oldest democracy whereas Pakistan has been experimenting with democracy since its independence. Moreover democratic process has been more stable in India as compare to Pakistan where democratic process has been derailed four times by army generals. Furthermore economically India is progressing and is regarded as future super power; on the other hand Pakistan’s economy is getting weaker day by day and is moving towards becoming a failed state. Under these circumstances international community is getting attracted towards investing in India as well as to capture its vast market. On the contrary the rising security issues in Pakistan with multiple domestic, socio economic and energy crisis, investors do not want to invest here, in fact local investors are also moving out of their country. Moreover USA and China are also making new economic and civil nuclear deals with India, thus giving a deathly blow to the trust of Pakistan in USA and China. Therefore at present Pakistan is feeling more threatened from India, betrayed from its old allies, insecure and isolated as ever.

### **Role of India in Afghanistan**

War on terror has given the status of frontline state to Pakistan but it has lost much from this war and made more enemies than friends at global level. Pakistan never enjoyed good relations with Afghanistan, though war in land locked country against Taliban is won by the support and help from Pakistan. Instead of appreciating, the war torn country is blaming its neighbor for the current instability and failure of their state, thus their relations are deteriorating

on a very fast pace. Quite the reverse, historically relations between India and Afghanistan have been friendly and good. During the Taliban regime it had always supported Northern Alliance and backed the coalition forces of Ahmed Shah Masood. After the collapse of Taliban regime, India looked for more firm footings in Afghanistan. For this purpose it opened two consulates in Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif and besides one embassy working in Kabul it reopened their consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad. Moreover India is giving substantial economic assistance to Afghanistan. It has signed an Agreement on Strategic Partnership with Afghanistan in October 2011. Gurmeet Kanwal gives detail account of Indian investments and assistance plans "USA\$ 1.5 is invested in some major Afghan reconstruction and development plans. Lately it committed USA\$500 million and is assisting Afghanistan in building 218 km-long Zaranj-Delaram road linking the Iranian border with the Garland Highway, electric power lines including one from the CARs to Kabul, hydroelectric power projects, school buildings, primary health centers and the new building for the Afghan Parliament. Furthermore inside India it is also training Afghan administrators, teachers and officer cadets" (Kanwal, 2013). Hence India is strengthening its ties with Afghanistan so as to have safe access to Central Asian States energy reservoirs that is vital for the economic growth of India.

### **Pakistan reservations regarding Indian Presence in Afghanistan**

Pakistan is not comfortable with the growing nexus between India and Afghanistan. It has strong reservations regarding the opening of new consulates near the city of Quetta. Indian activities of every kind are seen with suspicion by the intelligentsia of Pakistan. As stated by USA journalist Robert Kaplan in an article, "In the mind of the ISI, India uses its consulates in Afghanistan to back rebels in Pakistan's southwestern province of Baluchistan, whose capital, Quetta, is only a few hours' drive from Kandahar" (Kaplan, 2008). For many decades Afghanistan is being accused of assisting and supporting anti Pakistan elements especially the insurgent movement of Baluchistan. According to Barnett Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, the Afghan government extended aid to some 30,000 Baluchi tribesmen in the 1970s" (Rubin & Siddique, 2006). Now with the growing involvement of India in Afghanistan, Pakistan feels itself more vulnerable as ever.

Pakistan always wishes to see a pro Pakistan government in its western neighbor. At times due to this very reason it ended up taking some steps which might not serve the interest of both countries. Now the exit of ISAF forces seems to be taking place in 2014 from Afghanistan therefore Pakistan is in a dire need to have a future ruling government which takes care of their interest i.e. of restraining India. But on the other hand there is greater participation of India in internal affairs of Afghanistan; thus facing the

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predicament of having the possibility of hostile borders at both eastern and western border which is utterly not acceptable to the political and military establishment. Moreover with the opening of couple of Indian consulates at western border is ample evidence of hidden Indian agenda i.e. of destabilizing Pakistan. India has been frequently alleged for supporting the Baluch nationalists thus creating anarchy and instability inside Pakistan. Nicholas Howenstein and Sumit Ganguly express the hidden motive of India as "India's intelligence agencies would like to harm Pakistan in areas such as Baluchistan as a response for the damage that they suffered from years of hidden warfare carried out by Pakistan in Kashmir" (Howenstein & Ganguly, 2009). Nevertheless the growing Indian interest in Afghanistan is raising eyebrows and great suspicion among the policy makers. In the historical Pakistan's and Indian competition of having greater influence in Afghanistan, this time there is a probability of India winning it with Pakistan ending up with strategic loss rather than getting much desired strategic depth.

### **Stable Afghanistan Leads to Peaceful Pakistan**

Afghanistan and Pakistan have deep socio cultural and ethnic ties that are why any disorder and trouble in one country has an immediate effect on its neighbor. From the very beginning though governments of both countries did not have friendly relations but people from both sides of the border enjoy warm and cordial relations. However over the period Afghanistan has gone through tough times experiencing war, civil war, ethnic conflicts and tribal chieftains clashes. Though these war like situation has happened in the western border but Pakistan could not keep it save from the spillover of all these catastrophic events and got caught in fire. For the last forty years Pakistan has been a part of the problem and parcel of the solution of the Afghan imbroglio.

Since the beginning of war on terror Pakistan has been experiencing massive shocks and repercussions on its soil. Peace and stability in the western border is the prerequisite for peaceful region. The execution of exit plan of ISAF/NATO forces in the coming year from Afghanistan is seen as no more just a speculation by high officials. Pakistan has deep reservations regarding the outcome, once foreign forces leave the land of Afghans. Moreover there are serious apprehensions considering the future for the reason that any instability following the ISAF withdrawal would lead to more Afghans refugees fleeing to Pakistan, thus creating more dangerous grounds. Furthermore Pakistan is already dealing with the irreparable damage that it has experienced after the Soviet-Afghan war. Now it is not ready to start another decade dealing with the threats and terrorization from across its western

border. Therefore stable and prosperous Afghanistan is in the best interest of Pakistan.

Durable peace in the region is not possible without overcoming the trust deficit that exists between the two main protagonists of war on terror. USA needs Pakistan assistance to carry out its exit plan safely. On the other hand there are ample chances of civil war breaking out due to the power vacuum and weak central government in Afghanistan. In such a case Pakistan can play a key role in bringing all the Afghan factions on a single platform so to come to a decision for stable and lasting peace for its western neighbor. Pakistan is well aware of the political environment and the tribal hierarchy present there for centuries. As before it can play a decisive role in resolving the issues amid these strong forces but now peace process that solely includes only the Afghans is essential for getting positive outcomes of peace efforts by international community.

### **Pakistan Need for Political Paradigm shift**

Afghanistan is a significant country for Pakistan in several ways but most importantly it's a gateway to reach the oil and gas rich Central Asian States. Energy crisis is getting worse day by day with the rampant corruption persisting for decades; sooner Pakistan would be looking for new resources to fulfill its energy requirements. At present political leadership is looking for safe access to the energy reservoirs of Central Asian States via Afghanistan. To accomplish this task it need to make a major political paradigm shift. Though in 2007 Pakistan foreign policy vis-à-vis Taliban took a U turn but on the political level Pakistan was frequently blamed for its double policy game in its western neighbor. At present its leadership needs to pursue a crystal clear progressive foreign policy regarding its land locked neighbor with no covert agenda. After a decade long war on terror, Pakistan is well aware of its position among the comity of nations and is mindful of the fact that in case of instability in its western neighbor Pakistan would be the biggest sufferer in the region.

Over a period Taliban has become more of a menace than a blessing in disguise for Pakistan. Much damage has been done not by the Baluch insurgent but by the Taliban illegal activities throughout the country. Political leadership and army establishment must differentiate among Pakistan friends and enemies. Furthermore there must be agreement among several political and religious parties on policies that must be carried out to secure the interests of Pakistan on the international level. Though death of Hakimullah Mehsud in a drone attack gives a severe blow on the working of TTP but the political parties are playing politics on his death. One must realize that an



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enemy of state cannot be a friend to any political party or institution. Therefore the need of the hour is to work together for the betterment of Pakistan and not to server vested interests.

Moreover instead of patronizing the Afghans, Pakistan needs to bring peace in their own country. Relations with Afghanistan need to be built on equal footings and it should altogether give up the attitude of big brother. Furthermore another important political shift falls in the category of developing good and trustful relations with India. By doing so there would be minimal chances of hurting Pakistan by India through using the soil of Afghanistan. Moreover such a step would also help in reducing the paranoia related to Indian hidden activities with the aim of damaging the very foundation of Pakistan.

Pakistan is an important country of South Asia. Ever since its independence, it has been playing a significant role in the regional political sphere. As far as Afghanistan is concerned it has an important regional responsibility and has legitimate interests in an ultimate political arrangement that would be concluded there in coming years. Moreover the new year of 2015 would be bringing new challenges to the national interest of Pakistan. Role of state would be enhanced that will contribute in strengthening its position in the wake of major regional change i.e. the withdrawal of USA forces from Afghanistan.

### **Conclusion**

At present Pakistan is going through tough times and experiencing the most volatile internal security issues and it has never felt as vulnerable as it is now. The death of Osama bin Laden by an USA unilateral attack in Abbottabad has created more problems for Pakistan as its sincerity in War on Terrorism is being questioned. Furthermore such a military operation where USA forces were directly involved raised the question of respect of Pakistan sovereignty which doubts its status of being an USA ally. USA is jubilant over the killing of Osama bin Laden as that killing him was their main aim since the beginning of War on Terrorism and now they are planning to evacuate Afghanistan since they have achieved their objective. Furthermore this war has been an extraordinary burden on its economy and the ongoing economic recession in the world does not permit USA to indulge in such an expensive activity like war.

Under the circumstances Pakistan is in deep mess and serious security concerns have been raised because if USA leaves Afghanistan than Pakistan would again be dealing with the Afghanistan mess all alone which would be a next to impossible for Pakistan. Currently Pakistan should be concentrating

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only in finding out a permanent solution of its security concerns which is increasing on a very high pace because Osama bin Laden, Baitullah Mahsud and Hakimullah Mehsud would be replaced by another hardcore extremist but the actual requirement is to uproot their terrorists' network which could only lead to internal security and peace and save Pakistan from becoming a failed state. Though Pakistan has achieved much success through the military operation of Zarb-e-Azab but still there is a long way to go in order to make Pakistan a vibrant, efficacious and peaceful stable state.

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