

Afghan Peace Process and Security Implications for Pakistan

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Abstract

On 29 February 2020, the Trump Administration signed a landmark peace agreement with the Taliban office in Doha, Qatar, signalling a clear-cut plan to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan in a phased manner. So far, the peace process has not progressed as planned and there may be more snags on the way before a complete withdrawal takes place. Scenarios that can develop after the foreign troops depart from Afghanistan can range from chaos and anarchy, civil war, and limited peace. The return to normalcy in Afghanistan will entirely depend on the future political dispensation in the country and the attitude of the neighbours and competing interests in the region.

The future situation in Afghanistan, will have direct security implications for Pakistan. A peaceful Afghanistan will lend to peace and stability in Pakistan and a restive one will add to its problems. Under the circumstances, it is imperative that the government of Pakistan should be prepared for all kinds of eventualities and not be caught unaware like the last time the foreign forces withdrew from Afghanistan.

This paper argues that whereas, it is of utmost importance for the government of Pakistan to continue to facilitate and support the current peace process in Afghanistan, keeping in mind its legitimate national interests; it should review its internal and external security policy in anticipation of all kind of situations.

Keywords: Trump Administration, Afghan Peace Process, American Troops Withdrawal, Pak-Afghan Relations, Civil War, Resurgence of Terrorism.

Introduction

Pak Afghan relations have been testy at the best of times. There are ample reasons for this unsatisfactory state of affairs. Afghanistan was the only country that voted against the admission of Pakistan into the UNO in September 1947.¹ It refused to accept Pakistan as a genuine successor state to the British Raj and laid irredentist claims over a sizeable portion of its North Western territories. Not only this, the Afghan government sponsored the creation of Pashtunistan – a separatist entity. This hostile attitude from its western neighbours has caused understandable unease for Pakistan.² India exploited the situation by supporting the Afghan governments in their anti-Pakistan policies.

Historically, the instability within Afghanistan has also enhanced Pakistan's security concerns. In 1973, King Zahir Shah, the long serving monarch of Afghanistan was deposed in a palace coup by his cousin Muhammed Daoud Khan. In 1978 President Daoud was killed and replaced by a communist regime. The instability created by the infighting among the *Khalq* and *Parcham* factions of the communist party gave the Soviets a chance to intervene in December 1979. While the world condemned the Soviet

¹ Barnett R. Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, "Resolving the Pakistan-Afghanistan Stalemate," USIP Special Report, October 1, 2006, www.usip.org (Accessed September 16, 2020).

² Feisal Khan, "Why borrow trouble for yourself and lend it to your neighbors? Understanding the historical roots of Pakistan's Afghan Policy," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* Vol. 37, No. 4, Obama's Af-Pak Strategy and Its Impact in South Asia, Part 2 (October-December 2010): 171-189.

invasion of Afghanistan, India supported it. India was also among the very few nations to send their team to attend the Moscow Olympics of 1980 that was boycotted by international community.

The Soviet invasion triggered an insurrection and displacement within Afghanistan. This affected peace and stability in Pakistan, in the shape of a huge influx of refugees and a phenomenal increase in terrorist activities. The Soviet forces withdrew in 1989. After their withdrawal, a civil war broke out in Afghanistan. In 1996, the Taliban were able to subdue the warring factions and assume power in Kabul. In October 2001, in the wake of 9/11 attacks, the Americans invaded Afghanistan to punish the Taliban for giving refuge to the Al-Qaeda. The aim was to defeat the masterminds behind the attacks. The American invasion of Afghanistan will be completing two decades next year. The long war has taken its toll. There is a palpable battle fatigue in the American camp and the Trump administration is now negotiating a peace agreement with the Taliban before they leave Afghanistan. Clearly, the situation after American withdrawal from Afghanistan would have security implications for Pakistan. It was observed, when the Soviets departed, they left behind an unsettled Afghanistan.

Peace in Afghanistan is important for peace and stability in Pakistan because there is a security connection that is hard to ignore. There are three reasons for the Pak Afghan 'security interdependence': One, Afghanistan is a landlocked country and its traditional access to the sea is through Pakistan under Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA 1965) has been misused for smuggling and other illicit activities.³ Two, both countries share a porous 2500 km border straddling a rugged mountainous terrain. Torkham and Spin

³ US AID Trade Project, Analysis of Afghanistan Pakistan Trade Agreement (APPTA): 3, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00K24B.pdf (Accessed 5 August 5, 2020)

Boldak are the main entry points on Pak Afghan border. Five more crossing places are used for movement of goods and people i.e., Ghulam Khan in North Waziristan, Angoor Ada in South Waziristan, Arandu in Chitral, Nawa Pass in Mohmand, Gursul in Bajaur, and Kharlachi in Kurram districts of newly merged FATA into KP. There are nearly seven hundred lesser-known entries and exits through mountain gullies and minor passes.⁴ Three, the divided tribes freely move across the Durand Line to visit relatives on a *rahdari* or a border permit. There is no legal basis for this concession, but this is the accepted norm to provide easement rights to tribesmen because Durand Line literally cuts across border villages and divides the tribes.⁵ This free tribal movement has often been used for illegal activity. After the 2014 attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar, the government of Pakistan decided upon a 20-point National Action Plan to curb terrorism.⁶ Though the decision to fence the border was not part of NAP but it was an outcome of extreme measures to control and to stop infiltration by terrorists.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the security threats emerging from Afghanistan imbroglio and the prospects of instability in the region. Experience tells us that withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan without first establishing peace can destabilize the entire region. Pakistan needs to be prepared for all eventualities.

⁴ Amina Khan, Issues in Pak Afghan Border Management, Issue Brief ISSI (2016): 4, <http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Final-Issue-brief-dated-26-9-2016.pdf> (Accessed July 28, 2020).

⁵ Ahmar Bilal Soofi, "Pakistan-Afghanistan Border Management: A Legal Perspective," PILDAT Report (2015), 13, <https://rsilpak.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Pakistan-Afghanistan-Border-Management-A-Legal-Perspective.pdf> (Accessed 28 July 2020).

⁶ Nation Action Plan 2014, <https://nacta.gov.pk/nap-2014/> (Accessed August 18, 2020).

Security Issues resulting from the Soviet Invasion

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the last quarter of the twentieth century had long term regional security implications for the region. Afghanistan was not unfamiliar territory for the Russians. It was the buffer state between its Central Asian possessions and the British India. They had been eyeing it for a long time. For the Russians it was the key to the Indian subcontinent and for the British, the gateway to Central Asia. Both imperial powers of the nineteenth century wanted to have influence in Afghanistan and they did so by trying to install rulers of their own choice in Kabul.⁷ This interplay of competing interests defined the rules of the Great Game (1830-1895). During most part of the twentieth century, Afghanistan remained on the periphery of world affairs. It remained unaffected by the two world wars. The Cold War also did not change the stasis until it became the venue for the showdown between the two superpowers of that time, the US and Soviet Union.

The Soviets intervened in Afghanistan and got embroiled in a losing war against the Mujahideen. President Reagan grasped this heaven-sent opportunity to settle scores with the Soviet 'evil empire.'⁸ Owing to its geographical location, Pakistan became a convenient conduit for the US military aid and resources to the Afghan Mujahideen groups fighting the Soviet forces. All kinds of arms and equipment, including the deadly

⁷ For the British plans to install a king of their choice in Afghanistan in the middle of the nineteenth century read William Darlymple, *Return of the King: The Battle for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

⁸ On March 1983, President Ronald Reagan described the Soviet Union as the 'evil empire,' in a speech delivered to the National Center for Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida. This speech became the moral plinth for the so-called Reagan doctrine of fighting evil (communism). The audio recording of the speech is available at <https://www.reaganfoundation.org/programs-events/webcasts-and-podcasts/podcasts/words-to-live-by/evil-empire-speech/>.

accurate Stinger man portable ant aircraft missiles were provided to the Mujahideen. Pakistani intelligence agencies distributed the arms and equipment and arranged for the military training of the Mujahideen. The Afghan jihad became internationally popular and young men from all over the Islamic world flocked to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. It found generous sponsors like the Saudi philanthropist Osama bin Laden also known as OBL. In later years OBL would acquire notoriety as the founder of Al-Qaeda and the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks.⁹

The Soviet Union suffered a death blow on the desolate plains of Afghanistan. It unravelled and the Warsaw pact dissolved in 1991. A flagging economy and imperial overreach proved to be the last straws that broke the Soviet back. Another great power was buried in the ‘Graveyard of Empires.’¹⁰ As the West rejoiced the end of Communism and the Fall of Berlin Wall, Afghanistan was quickly forgotten. No post-conflict strategy had been worked out and the wound was left to fester. To add further insult to this injury, the US imposed nuclear related sanctions on Pakistan.

After the departure of international actors from the scene, Pakistan was left to singlehandedly fend for itself, and to manage and contain the radioactive residue of the war next door. One lasting impact of the Soviet invasion of

⁹ The US Government sponsored *9/11 Commission Report* (2004) squarely blames bin Ladin for the attacks on mainland USA on September 11, 2001. Chapter 2 (p. 57 to 63) of the Report is devoted exclusively to the rise of Al-Qaeda and OBL’s role in founding it. The report is available as a Pdf file at <https://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>. OBL was killed on May 2, 2001 in a raid by a US Navy SEAL team in his compound in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad. He was buried at sea. An alternate version of history is currently not available.

¹⁰ The term ‘Graveyard of Empires’ has been used regularly to highlight the futility of occupying Afghanistan by force. The British learnt the lesson the hard way after two disastrous Afghan Wars in the nineteenth century. Gen Elphinstone Army in 1842, was massacred to the man, less Surgeon Major Brydon in Jalalabad, as it retreated from Kabul. This lends credence to the adage that ‘we never learn from history.’

Afghanistan was that it made the domestic situation extremely volatile. There were 3.5 million Afghan refugees on Pakistani soil, who were not willing to go back to a war-ravaged country. During their prolonged stay in Pakistan, some Afghan refugee camps had become breeding grounds for discontent and criminality. Drugs and Kalashnikov culture struck roots in the society. The foreign fighters from all over the world, who had married and settled in the tribal areas suddenly became jobless. Their own countries were not willing to accept them back. Some became part of the disparate warlords waging their own wars to expand turf, others looked for opportunities with the non-state actors proliferating at that time.

Within Afghanistan, the warlords fought for the spoils. The infighting and lack of a central authority in Afghanistan completely destabilized the country. Pakistan tried its best to resolve the lingering conflict, but the Afghan leaders proved too headstrong and reneged on all promises, even those made in the holy Kaaba. The chaos created by civil war created space for the Taliban. The Taliban were able to bring about a modicum of peace in Afghanistan. After the Taliban government was established in Kabul, Pakistan and two other countries recognized it. The other two being the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and UAE. Taliban proved to be harsh and intolerant rulers. They meted out rough justice, were ruthless misogynist and played host to Al-Qaeda. They were not open to reason and destroyed the Bamiyan Buddhas despite the best efforts of the government of Pakistan. They were also not willing to hand-over Al-Qaeda members on the pretext of hospitality. After the 9/11, Pakistan severed diplomatic ties with them and experienced a severe reaction. The Taliban operating inside Pakistan turned against the state. Several entities under a motley crowd of warlords started waging their private wars. The most serious trend that emerged from

their activities was their operations against the Pakistani state. After a while, these disparate groups coalesced under an umbrella group that identified itself as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP. This Pakistani chapter of the Taliban became a nuisance. A number of military operations were to be launched to purge and sanitize the areas.

Security Issues after the US Invasion

The 9/11 attacks on mainland America became a defining moment in world history. A group of hijackers on the behest of the Al-Qaeda, crashed their commandeered aero planes into the symbols of American might. The entire event was broadcast live by CNN for the world to see. The Bush administration took no time in launching a punitive strike against the Al-Qaeda cohorts and their hosts, the Taliban in Afghanistan. To give the offensive, a multinational colour, the US government assembled a ‘coalition of the willing,’ including its NATO and non-NATO allies under the banner head of Operation Enduring Freedom.¹¹

After occupying Afghanistan, the US along with its NATO partners and other allied nations tried to stabilize it through the mechanism of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission. This mission concluded in December 2014.¹² During this time an effort was made to reconstruct Afghanistan through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). This reconstruction effort was led by major US allies like the British, German and French militaries but it failed to bring about any real change in

¹¹ Operation Enduring Freedom, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/60083.htm> (Accessed July 28, 2020).

¹² ISAF's mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014), https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm (Accessed September 15, 2020).

this war wrecked country.¹³ In 2015, the NATO led mission to train and assist the nascent Afghan forces was given the title Resolute Mission Support or RSM. Its current commander is US Gen Austin Miller.¹⁴

When the US decided to attack Afghanistan, the Musharraf regime realized that it had no choice. So, it was quickly decided to part ways with the Taliban and agreeing to all seven US demands. The major concessions that the government of Pakistan conceded included Intel-sharing, unrestricted use of its air space, ports, and communication infrastructure.¹⁵ In return the Americans declared Pakistan the dubious recognition of a major non-NATO ally. This did bring temporary relief and reintegration into the international community but long-term benefits have been questionable. In fact, the U-turn on Taliban cost Pakistan dearly in terms of a severe internal backlash.

On October 7, 2001, the Americans launched Operation Enduring Freedom to dismantle and defeat the Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. By December 17, the Taliban had been removed from power. Its cadres disappeared into the countryside to fight another day. Many, including OBL were allowed to escape into neighbouring Pakistan. The theatre of war was extended into the tribal areas of Pakistan and armed predator drones were regularly used to target the compounds of alleged Taliban and Al-Qaeda commanders. The

¹³ Jaroslav Petřík, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Securitized Aid through Developmentalizing the Military," In: S. Brown and J. Grävingholt (eds) *The Securitization of Foreign Aid. Rethinking International Development Series* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-56882-38>.

¹⁴ Resolute Mission Support in Afghanistan, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_113694.htm (Accessed September 15, 2020).

¹⁵ Tughral Yamin, "Examining Pakistan's Strategic Decision to Support the US War on Terror," *Strategic Studies* (Spring 2016): 113-135, <http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Tughral-Yamin-35-No.2.pdf> (Accessed September 15, 2020).

drone approach was indiscriminate, and ham handed. It traumatized the population however it killed only a few alleged militants.¹⁶

A few months into the invasion of Afghanistan, Bush deviated from his main aim of defeating the Al-Qaeda and the Taliban and went off to finish Saddam Hussain in Iraq. The superficial pretext to invade was to destroy Saddam's mythical weapons of mass destruction. Actually, it was meant to showcase the American military might and occupy the oil reservoirs of the Middle East in the absence of a credible international opposition. As the military effort got divided on two fronts, the US efforts to stabilize Afghanistan faltered. Despite gross technological and military superiority, the two-term US presidents could not defeat the Taliban. Instead, they steadily regrouped to become a dominant group in Afghanistan, fighting both the NATO troops under the US command and the Kabul government. Obama tried to extricate from Afghanistan but could not because his generals did not allow him to do so. Now Trump, in his bid to win a second term elections, wants to leave Afghanistan expeditiously.¹⁷ His points-man on Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad signed a peace deal with the Taliban Qatar office February 29, 2020 signalling a clear intent to withdraw forces from Afghanistan. The complete withdrawal is contingent on conditions like the release of prisoners, an intra-Afghan dialogue and decrease the levels of violence.¹⁸ The intra-Afghan dialogue finally began in Doha on September

¹⁶ Peter Bergen & Katherine Tiedemann, "Washington's Phantom War: The Effects of the U.S. Drone Program in Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (JULY/AUGUST 2011): 12-18.

¹⁷ Aamna Khan, "Intra-Afghan Dialogue a peace effort or election campaign strategy?" *CGTN*, September 15, 2020, 2020, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-09-15/Intra-Afghan-Dialogue-a-peace-effort-or-election-campaign-strategy--TNITjejoJi/index.html> (Accessed September 15, 2020).

¹⁸ Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the

12, 2020, after the last of the Taliban prisoners were released by the Afghan government. The government in Kabul wants an immediate ceasefire but there is little hope for that at the moment.

On the eve of the talks the foreign minister of Pakistan Shah Mahmood Qureshi reiterated Pakistan's position on the Afghan peace process i.e.

1. To continue to support the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process while respecting the consensus that emerges from intra-Afghan negotiations.
2. To ensure that Afghanistan neither witnesses the violent days of the past nor becomes a space for elements who would harm others beyond its borders.
3. To deepen and sustain economic engagement with Afghanistan for its reconstruction and economic development.
4. To ensure a well-resourced, time-bound return of Afghan refugees to their homeland with dignity, and honour.¹⁹

Pakistan has been preparing for peace in Afghanistan for a long time now. It has taken certain long-term measures that it believes will help stabilize the situation on its own side of the international border. This includes merging the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into

Taliban and the United States of America, February 29, 2020 which corresponds to Rajab 5, 1441 on the Hijri Lunar calendar and Hoot 10, 1398 on the Hijri Solar calendar, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Agreement-For-Bringing-Peace-to-Afghanistan-02.29.20.pdf> (accessed August 18, 2020)

¹⁹ "Pakistan proposes 4-point way forward as intra-Afghan talks begin in Qatar, Express Tribune, September 12, 2020, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2263705/pakistan-proposes-4-point-way-forward-as-intra-afghan-talks-begin-in-qatar> (Accessed September 15, 2020)

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province,²⁰ and fencing the Pak Afghan border.²¹ The levies have been made part of the police and the system of policing has been overhauled and improved. The fighting capacity of the Frontier Corps (FC), the main law enforcing agency responsible for guarding the border and maintaining law and order has been expanded and enhanced.²² The military led counter insurgency campaign in the former tribal areas has successfully purged the malcontent from most parts of the tribal districts but there are still pockets from where anti state elements can operate. All measures are being taken to curtail the activities of leadership of the Tehreek Taliban Pakistan operating from their sanctuaries in Afghanistan. To complicate the situation, security forces often exchange fire causing casualties to each other troops and souring bilateral relations.

Likely Scenarios

As the Americans prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan, it is important to conjecture possible scenarios that can emerge. Some of these possibilities will depend upon the speed of the American evacuation such as:

- **Swift Withdrawal**

In case the Americans and the other foreign countries with a presence in Afghanistan withdraw quickly without a formal agreement between all Afghan parties, the entire area can descend into chaos. The Afghan National

²⁰ Sartaj Aziz, *Between Dreams and Realities: Some Milestones in Pakistan's History* (Second Edition, Karachi: OUP, 2020), 414; Presentation of the Committee on FATA Reforms 2016, <https://pmo.gov.pk/documents/PresentationFATAReformCommittee.pdf> (Accessed August 18, 2020).

²¹ Mushtaq Yusufzai, Francis Whittaker, Wajahat S. Khan and Ahmed Mengli, "Pakistan is building a fence along border with Afghanistan," *NBC News*, May 17, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/pakistan-building-fence-along-border-afghanistan-n873291> (Accessed August 18, 2020)

²² Information about FC is available at <http://frontiercorpskpk.com/>.

Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) may disappear along with their weapons. There would be lawlessness and Afghanistan may fracture on ethnic lines. This would unleash forces that would be difficult to control. A fresh wave of refugees could flee to Pakistan, to escape the fighting and mayhem in their own country. The Taliban may return to power, but it will take them time to make peace with their rivals.

- **Steady Short-Term Withdrawal**

The US forces withdraw as per plan leaving behind some residual elements to oversee the transition. The local forces opposed to the government in Kabul will wait out for the American withdrawal, while keeping the pressure on the Afghan state forces.

- **Long-Term Phased Withdrawal**

Although a long-term phased withdrawal would be ideal, but this may not be possible. President Trump does not have the patience to continue financing a dead deal. His administration and other donor agencies will have to provide billions of dollars to the government in Kabul to remain afloat.

Probably, under all kinds of evacuation eventualities, there can be brief or prolonged period of turmoil, depending on who finally takes control of the government in Kabul. The size and shape of external involvement can exacerbate the situation in Afghanistan. The odds are that ultimately the Taliban will form a central government. Irrespective of who are the new rulers in Kabul, it will be necessary for all stakeholders to show flexibility and accommodation in their dealings. Although there is a visible donor fatigue; countries, or consortia of countries might still be willing to invest to repair the damaged and wrecked administrative and physical infrastructure of Afghanistan.

There can be several political possibilities of a post-conflict Afghanistan, a few of these are listed below:

- **Independent Power Groups:** Currently there are three to four power groups in Afghanistan, namely the government in Kabul, the Taliban, the Khurasan franchise of the Islamic State (IS) and independent warlords. Given the power that each group wields, a tussle for the ultimate control can result in the fracturing of Afghanistan along ethnic or ideological grounds.
- **A hybrid system of government:** If all Afghan stakeholders agree on a compromise formula, there can be a hybrid form of government, in which everyone is given its due share. Of course, there would be problems regarding the form of government (traditional, Islamic, parliamentary, presidential etc.), position of the head of state (the head of state is currently the President of the country but the Taliban prefer to call their leader the Emir) and share of powerful ministries (interior, foreign affairs, defence etc.)
- **A Taliban Government:** If the Taliban are able to form a government by themselves, they will have to give major concessions to other claimants. This would be necessary to keep them in good humour, so that they do not create problems.

Possible Preventive Measures

For Pakistan, the worst-case scenario would be a complete chaos, if the Americans withdraw Afghanistan without a proper transition. The last helicopter leaving the Saigon embassy rooftop scenario could result in bitter infighting among the Afghans. A peaceful change in Afghanistan is in the best interest of Pakistan. This is quite well understood in Islamabad and that's the reason the government of Pakistan is doing its best to facilitate the

peace talks between the Taliban and the US government. Pakistan is also meaningfully engaging with the government of President Ashraf Ghani.

There is a need that the government of Pakistan should prepare contingency plans for the post withdrawal situations. This should include a meaningful engagement with all internal and external stakeholders in the following areas:

- **Afghan Refugees**

The government of Pakistan should prepare a detailed program regarding the honourable return of the Afghan refugees already present in Pakistan. The government should also give citizenship to third and fourth generation Afghan refugees, who have proven themselves to be loyal and law-abiding citizens of Pakistan. In case there is another exodus from Afghanistan, the government should be prepared to handle it.

- **Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Afghanistan**

Pakistan must become part of the reconstruction and rehabilitation program of Afghanistan. This will be a meaningful activity not only for those in the business of building and construction but also for specialists who can help rebuild the broken systems in Afghanistan in the health, education, judicial and administrative organizations to name a few.

- **Restoring Trade Ties**

Pakistan had a very favourable trade relationship with Afghanistan. The landlocked status of Afghanistan helped Pakistan in this regard. A fraying relationship and Indian efforts to help Afghanistan circumvent Pakistan has reduced the Pak Afghan trade to a trickle. Although Iran is now wanting to limit Indian influence in the Chabahar port, the Indian investments cannot

be ignored.²³ The Indian Border Roads Organization (BRO) constructed the Zaranj-Dilaram road to connect the Afghan ring road with the Chabahar port.²⁴ Pakistan needs to rebuild trade ties with Afghanistan after the foreign forces leave. According to a conservative estimate there is a potential of at least 5 billion in trade with Afghanistan.²⁵ Good trade relations would be a win-win for all and would reduce the tendencies of indulging in terrorism.

- **International Border**

Government of Pakistan is fencing the border but this should not be an end towards demarcating the international border. Political means must be adopted to once and for all settle the issue of the Durand Line with those, who are about to assume the levers of power in Kabul. An unrecognized border can sour relations between nations.

Conclusion

The remote inaccessible border region of Pakistan's former tribal areas and the adjoining areas in Afghanistan had in the past provided an ideal hiding place for criminals on the run. During the jihad against the Soviet Union, it was used as launching pad for the Mujahideen. After the Soviet withdrawal,

²³ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhry, Iran's Chabahar port exports cargo to India and Southeast Asia, notwithstanding slowdown, *The Economic Times*, August 2, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/irans-chabahar-port-exports-cargo-to-india-and-southeast-asia-notwithstanding-slowdown/articleshow/77313124.cms?from=mdr> (Accessed September 15, 2020).

²⁴ Ajay Kaul, "India hands over strategic Zaranj-Delaram highway to Afghan," *Hindustan Times*, January 22, 2009, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/india-hands-over-strategic-zaranj-delaram-highway-to-afghan/story-WSbFNMguMWjvY39V7fR46H.html> (Accessed September 15, 2020).

²⁵ Ishrat Hussain and Muhammad Ather Elahi, "The Future of Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade Relations," *USIP Paper*, August 17, 2015, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2015/08/future-afghanistan-pakistan-trade-relations> (Accessed September 15, 2020).

the Mujahedeen dispersed or joined warring factions under independent warlords, fighting for their exclusive turf and influence. Their activities spilled into Pakistan. The porous Pak Afghan border allowed for easy logistics to support effective guerrilla campaigns against foreign forces and state authorities. Irregular militias outside the state control could plant explosive devices with impunity, engage in hit and run tactics before exfiltrating through the gaps in the check posts to disappear into Afghanistan. Only to return when environment was safe.

This situation must change for the good. Neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan can afford to return to anarchy in the future. All efforts must be made to remove the prevailing environment of mistrust and distrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Close collaboration and cooperation based on goodwill will help in bringing in peace and stability in the region. No stone should be left unturned to prevent a return to violence. Proper plans must be made to be prepared for all kinds of eventualities including a peaceful and not so peaceful return to normalcy. All levers including economic, diplomatic and military handles must be used to ensure that Pakistan does not suffer from upheaval and violence in Afghanistan and that it benefits from peace and prosperity in the region.