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Background Paper

# Pakistan and Afghanistan- Then What Need To Do?



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# CONTENTS

Preface

Introduction

The Current Nature of Pak Afghan Relations 08

At Popular Level 08

At Governmental Level 08

Current and Future Challenges to the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan 09

The Issue of Cross Border Terrorism and Border Management 09

Reconciliation (Negotiations with Taliban) 10

The Withdrawal of American and NATO Forces 10

Interests of Neighbours in Afghanistan and its Impact on Pak Afghan relations 11

Challenges and Opportunities 12



# BACKGROUND PAPER

## Pakistan and Afghanistan-Then What Need To Do?

September 2013

### FOREWORD

At governmental level, the relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan are not good. After 9/11, when the new government in Afghanistan took power, the bilateral relations of the two neighbors witnessed many ups and downs. Afghan government complains that Pakistan is supporting Taliban, due to which stability is not coming to Afghanistan and Pakistan government complains that Afghanistan is hosting Pakistani Taliban.

PILDAT has prepared this background paper for the Dialogue in Kabul of the Defence Committees of the Upper Houses of Parliaments of both countries schedule for September 10-11, 2013.

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#### Disclaimer

The views, opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of PILDAT.

Islamabad  
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# BACKGROUND PAPER

## Pakistan and Afghanistan-Then What Need To Do?

September 2013

### About the Author



Mr. Salim Safi was born in District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He joined NNI (News Network International), thus became a journalist after graduation from University of Peshawar. Due to his professionalism, he became bureau chief of NNI for Peshawar city, from where he covered, Afghanistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA. He also started writing a column for national dailies. His columns published in national Urdu Dailies, '*Mashriq*', '*Aaj*' and '*Pakistan*' from 2000 till 2008 received wide recognition for his in-depth analysis and presentation of the post 9/11 situation. In 2004 Saleem's first book, *Afghanistan: The Role of US, Taliban and Pakistani Religious Parties*, received wide spread acclaim. He is currently writing his second book.

With the advent of electronic media in Pakistan, Saleem Safi became part of it. From 2002 till 2004, he hosted a PTV prime time Pashto talk show from Peshawar and then '*Saleem Safi K Sath* (with Saleem Safi) from PTV Islamabad, from 2005 to 2008. He has also been hosting Pashto talk show '*syasat*' (Politics) on Khyber TV, a Pashto TV channel. Towards the end of 2008, Mr. Safi joined Pakistan's biggest news group, Jang and is since hosting his talk show '*Jirga*' on GEO TV. He also contributes a column to Daily Jang with the same name, Jjirga. Mr. Saeem Safi is counted amongst the country's more known TV talk show hosts. He has interviewed many national and international leaders on regional situation.



September 2013

## The Current Nature of Pak Afghan Relations

### At Popular Level

At popular level, Pak-Afghan relations are perceived in rather very strange manner. It is difficult to comprehend the nuances of these relations without understanding their social and historical context. Almost every Afghan has complaints against Pakistan. Afghans consider Pakistan to be responsible for their destruction much more than any super power. Media and political circles refer to Pakistan in the same manner that in Pakistan reference is made to USA. Like most Pakistanis think nothing big can happen in Pakistan without USA, majority of Afghans think, nothing in Afghanistan can happen without ISI (Pakistan's premier intelligence agency). Blaming Pakistan and its intelligence agency for every unpleasant incident has become a fashion. But along with this, it is also an interesting reality like in Pakistan Political Leaders, Civil Servants and Civil Society always wish to have good relations with USA, Afghans of same classes continuously try to have better relations with Pakistan. Like people of Pakistan with means, consider having a house in the west necessary, the rich Afghans of East and Northern Afghanistan likes to buy property in Pakistan as well as shifting of their families there. Whatever they may have in their hearts, all Pakhtuns have some connection with or need Pakistan, so cannot challenge or oppose Pakistan. However, those from Central or Southern Afghanistan are exceptions to it as they consider any relations with Pakistan, secret or open bad. But overall the relations between traders, literary figures, poets and journalists of both countries have very good relations with each other. Pakistan's TV channels like GEO and Khyber are very popular in Afghanistan. Pakistani singers, both Pashto and Urdu are quite popular in Afghanistan. Similarly, Afghan Pashto singers are very popular among Pakhtuns of Pakistan. Pakistanis are generally ill informed about Afghan politics and they often do not even note many major political changes there, but Afghans have extra ordinary interests in Pakistani political developments. They know Pakistani politicians and the young generation having stayed and grown in Pakistan has developed a habit of following political developments there.

### At Governmental Level

At governmental level Pak Afghan Relations had never been good. Both developed extreme differences at the birth of Pakistan on the Durand Line issue. When Afghanistan joined the Soviet bloc and Pakistan became part of the American bloc during the cold war, their bilateral relations

worsened. Due to very strong opposition from Pakistan of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the then government of Afghanistan and its supporters started considering Pakistan as top enemy. In the early days of Mujahidin and then during the Taliban era their bilateral relations were relatively better, but after 9/11, when anti Taliban people government took power in Afghanistan, there relations soured.

There have been many highs and lows during the Karzai government. Pakistan supported Hamid Karzai during both Afghan presidential elections and around both elections their relations were better but overall tension has been dominant. The anti Pakistan elements from North Afghanistan pressurised Karzai against Pakistan and difference on the issue of Taliban also remained. Afghan government has continuously been complaining against Pakistan's covert support for Taliban. Pakistan has been complaining that its enemy India is using Afghan territory against it with permission of the Afghan government. Pakistani establishment believes that Baloch separatists have not only camps in Afghanistan, but are also getting help through it. Pakistan has developed a new complaint that Afghan intelligence agency (NDS), with the help of Indian intelligence agency (RAW) and other secret services have provided sanctuaries to Pakistani Taliban in Kunar and Nuristan and providing them with weapons and money. Towards the end of 2011, Pak Afghan relations had improved a little and on the wish of President Karzai, attempts were being made to find a resolution with Taliban bypassing the Americans. USA was not happy with this development. A common commission headed by Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani was established to further this process, but with different incidents including Prof. Rabbani's killing derailed it.

President Karzai leaving Pakistan tried to join the American camp again, but since the past few months Pakistan and America have gotten closer once again. On the other side President Karzai government's relations with USA and Pakistan have become tense. President Karzai has complaints that Pakistan and USA are trying to reach agreements with Taliban, bypassing his government. On the other side, Pakistan and USA complains that President Karzai is sabotaging rather than cooperating in their efforts to find peace. But it does not mean that Pakistan and Afghanistan are headed towards a declared conflict, for the simple reason that both cannot afford it. Pakistan has over the past few years improved its relations with Northern Forces (non-Pashtuns) to the extent that they avoid criticizing Pakistan openly. Rather their attitude towards

September 2013

Pakistan is more accommodative and friendly than Pakhtuns. Thus Pakistan has got a balancing factor to President Karzai's government and those Pakhtuns affiliated with it. Due to this policy of Pakistan and the new approach, President Karzai and Afghan Pakhtuns are both surprised and worried as they cannot take shelter behind Northern pressure to justify their anti Pakistan actions.

### Current and Future Challenges to governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan

The most important current challenge facing both governments is peace and the most important future challenge is keeping the post 2014 situation of the region in control. At present there appears to be no chance of political reconciliation between the Afghan Government and Taliban. Taliban activities are on the rise. Neither Afghan Army nor Police have achieved the required standards, nor do the other institutions have the required stability. Thus it appears difficult for Afghan Government to face the Taliban without foreign troops. However, this is also clear that unlike past Taliban cannot occupy all of Afghanistan.

Thus one notes the clouds of a new and disastrous civil war in Afghanistan. Obviously, Pakistan cannot be immune to the negative influences of this civil war. Thus, the biggest challenge for the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan is to find a political solution and protect themselves against the probable destruction and civil war in the post 2014 era. This scenario demands that the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan cooperate with each other with goodwill and honesty and plan with mutual consultation and trust for the coming dangers but unfortunately there is a serious lack of mutual trust. The decision makers of both sides are unable to get out of the past and are not ready to trust each other. The complexity of their bilateral relations is probably the biggest challenge for both.

### The Issue of Cross Border Terrorism and Border Management

The hundreds of miles long Durand Line has been historically the cause of tense relations between the two neighbors and it continues to be the source of most of the current problems. Main factor is its lack of proper management. Afghan government has not accepted it since the division of the Sub continent. It opposed Pakistan's membership of UN due to this issue. Till the 90s there were political forces that actively sought the

elimination of this border and wanted to create a new State, Pakhtunistan. Historically Afghan governments have been supporting such elements due to which Pakistani establishment has always been worried. Similarly, Afghanistan has always been closer to India, at times permitting the use of its soil to be used against Pakistan, making Pakistan never forget Afghanistan. Pakistani establishment had always opposed governments and forces in Afghanistan that raised the issue of Durand Line. After the demise of Soviet Union the anti Durand Line forces on both sides of the border became ineffective. This threat to Pakistan has decreased to a large extent. Afghans have accepted Durand Line even though it is still alive in Poetry and literature or at emotional level. As every Pakistani knows, it is impossible to get Kashmir by force but it is also not possible for any political leader to announce the recognition of Indian held Kashmir as part of India because it has become an emotional issue for Pakistan. Similarly Durand Line has also become an emotional issue for Afghans and no Afghan ruler, specially a Pakhtun can publicly declare acceptance of Durand Line. In practice all Afghan governments accept Durand Line as Border between the two countries. Even Sibghatullah Mujadidi, who became Afghan President after Soviet withdrawal purely due to Pakistan's support, refused to accept Pakistan's demand to formally recognize Durand Line as international boundary. Similarly, Taliban who became rulers of Afghanistan with Pakistani support and received Pakistan's support till 9/11 in the face of global opposition could not take the risk of publicly accepting the Durand Line, despite Pakistan's insistence. The disputed status of the border and the unique conditions of Tribal Areas has made Durand Line the source of many complexities. Probably, this is the only international border that is crossed daily by around 50,000 individuals without any passport or visa. In the post 9/11 situation this status of the Durand Line has become the root of tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Afghan government complains that its opponents, the Taliban, take refuge in Pakistan and prepare for actions against Afghan government from there. Pakistan responds with explaining its difficulty in knowing who is a Talib and who is not due to the free cross border movement and presence of a large number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Pakistan has also found a new complaint that Pakistani Taliban are taking refuge in Kunar and Nooristan provinces of Afghanistan. Afghan government responds with excuses of having weak writ in the areas adjacent to Pakistan. Thus both governments are worried and also have excuses against each other's complaints.

# BACKGROUND PAPER

## Pakistan and Afghanistan-Then What Need To Do?

September 2013

Pakistani government in the past had proposed a barbed wire on the Durand Line, but that was not acceptable to the Afghan government due to its historical and emotional status. As a result of Pakistani diplomatic efforts last year at the tripartite London Conference, with U.S and British support both countries agreed on formation of a common commission for border management. However, Afghan government has not given names for the commission showing it is not serious about it.

### Reconciliation (Negotiations with Taliban)

America and its allies went through three stages of dealing with the Taliban. In the first stage they wanted to suppress the Taliban through use of force only and were not ready for any political (negotiated) way out. About three years back they started the policy of reconciliation which was actually a policy of reintegration. This policy sought Taliban acceptance of Afghan government, giving up of resistance to it and their becoming part of the political process. When this also failed to achieve much, the Americans and its allies have started talking of reconciliation. Americans and its allies are serious about reconciliation and in a hurry, wanting it to be completed before 2014. They have mainly three demands from Taliban, (1) give up terrorism; declare severance of relations with Al Qaeda; give guarantee of not permitting the use of Afghan territory for international terrorism, (2) accept Afghan Constitution and (3) Give up violations of Human Rights. The real demand is the first one, and the remaining two are for their image and bargaining. The Taliban demands are (1) All foreign troops should leave Afghanistan (2) In place of the current constitution, opportunity should be provided to prepare a new constitution in accordance with Sharia (Islamic Jurisprudence) and the wishes of Afghan people (Taliban).

The Americans had set the three demands as pre conditions for initiation of dialogue, however, in practice negotiations have started without Taliban announcing acceptance of any of the conditions. Similarly Afghan Taliban had refused to talk in the presence of foreign troops but they have also in practice started negotiations in the presence of foreign troops. As far as Karzai government is concerned, it has been willing for reconciliation from the beginning however, on its own terms. After assuming power, President Karzai had formed a commission for the purpose under the leadership of Sibghatullah Mujadidi. However, the Americans and its allies did not permit him to go ahead on this, as they then wanted to deal with Taliban by force. After re-election of President Hamid Karzai,

relations with Pakistan improved, a common commission for negotiations with Taliban was formed. However, despite Pakistan's efforts the Taliban did not agree to negotiate with Afghan government. President Karzai believes that Taliban cannot say no to Pakistan, so when a few months passed without any positive response from the Taliban, he started believing that Pakistan is not trying seriously. After the murder of Prof. Burhannudin Rabbani, he and his colleagues started using harsh language against Pakistan. The commission became redundant. Both Pakistan and U.S lost hope in President Karzai and so once again have started working together. Pakistan and U.S worked together on negotiations with the Taliban that took place in Paris and Qatar. Afghan government is a part of this process; however, it sometimes cooperates and at other times strongly opposes it. Afghan government perceives that U.S and Pakistan are pursuing reconciliation with Taliban that will make Afghan Government irrelevant. Americans had agreed with Taliban to open the office of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, but Hamid Karzai opposed it considering it a parallel government to his. Though communications through intelligence and other sources as well as through Pakistan continue, but there have been no formal negotiations after Paris. Taliban have nominated Shahabuddin Dilawar as their formal representative.

Afghan government too is striving on its own for reconciliation with Taliban. American and Pakistani officials are hopeful of finding reconciliation with Taliban. The real issue is not between NATO and Taliban but between the Afghan government /forces of the North and Taliban. American demand of severing ties with Al-Qaeda and not permitting the use of Afghan territory by International Terrorists in future is not difficult for Taliban to accept. But domestically the biggest hurdle is the refusal of Taliban to accept Afghan Constitution or be part of any political power sharing settlement and the refusal of non-Taliban Afghans to accept Taliban system. The majority of Taliban has accepted Mulla Omar as *Amir-Ul- Momineen* (Ruler of Believers). Thus he can neither be a president or a prime minister nor can Taliban accept anyone else as their leader during his life. On the other side, the return of Taliban system is absolutely unacceptable to Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmen and liberal Pakhtuns. They can accept anyone but the return of the Taliban system.

### The Withdrawal of American and NATO forces

America and its allies in NATO firmly want to leave Afghanistan by 2014. Switzerland, South Korea and Jordan have already withdrawn their forces, while the

September 2013

remaining also intends to leave by 2014. Only America and Britain want to maintain their bases. America plans to leave a few thousand and Britain wants to leave a few hundred. Mr. Mark Sedwill, the special representative of Britain to Pakistan and Afghanistan, in an interview said, Britain wants to keep only a few hundred soldiers. America and its allies are trying to have some sort of reconciliation with Taliban before withdrawing to show a false sense of victory, but even if that does not happen foreign would leave. America will try to maintain bases in Afghanistan till the very end and have concluded agreements with Afghan government which lets her keep troops in Afghanistan for ten more years. However, its total withdrawal like Soviet Union cannot be ruled out. Similarly, there were apprehensions that U.S rather than withdrawing may continue fighting however, after Obama's re-election there are very slim chances of this option.

#### Interests of Neighbours in Afghanistan and its Impact on Pak Afghan relations

There is a great Buzkashi, (A Central Asian/Afghan game in which competing horsemen try to snatch a headless goat carcass) rather than great game being played in Afghanistan. From America to Indonesia and from Saudi Arabia to United Arab Emirates, there is no country without interests or apprehensions connected with Afghanistan. That is why almost every important country of the world is involved with Afghanistan. Some is pulling it in one direction and others in another making the condition of Afghanistan like that of the butchered goat in the game of Buzkashi.

America and Iran are pulling it in opposite directions. Similarly Pakistan wants to turn it one way and India in another direction. The interests and apprehensions of states involved with Afghanistan are very complex and contradictory. Iran, China, Russia and the Central Asian States under its influence are afraid of the presence of NATO forces in Afghanistan. In this context their covert sympathies are with the Taliban. However, they also consider Taliban a threat after NATO withdraws. Taliban and Iran are ideological enemies of each other. Russia and China believe that the Taliban has relations with religious extremists in their countries and Central Asia and believe in case of Taliban success, Talibanisation and religious extremism will be exported to their countries as well. Pakistan and Iran are closer in opposition to American aims and objectives, but both understand that once the foreign troops leave, their interests in Afghanistan would collide. Pakistan is not happy with the presence of NATO

troops in Afghanistan, but if their withdrawal results in increased Indian influence or a civil war, then it would prefer NATO presence. India wants whatever happens but no one should come in power who is under the influence of Pakistan and Pakistan wants whatever happens those forces close to India must not get power in Afghanistan. America wants control of the resources of Central Asia through control of Afghanistan. If this does not succeed, then it wants that at least countries like China, Iran and Pakistan must not benefit from it. Chinese and Iranian wishes are in contradiction to this. West, China and Arabs are more worried about the use of Afghanistan as base by Al-Qaeda. Russia is more worried about Heroin and Opium. In this context, every country is trying to establish its lobby in Afghanistan. Every state supports one or other group with money and weapons. If one Afghan is being used by one country, another is being used by another. Confusion has spread in Afghanistan and everyone is making futile efforts, as a blind fish in muddy water.

Dilemma is that everyone wants a solution that will remove its apprehensions and ensure its interests. However, no state takes into account the apprehensions of another nor does he permit the security of others interests. The fact is that every state has some genuine apprehensions and interests, but everyone has added their desires to the list of their apprehensions and interests, due to which solution cannot be found. If every country's genuine apprehensions are removed and genuine interests are kept in mind and no state's apprehensions are addressed in a manner that increases those of another, and no state's genuine interests are met resulting in the negation of another state's genuine interests, then a practical solution can be found. Thus, Afghanistan which is currently a bone of contention between different states can also become the center and source of cooperation.

#### Challenges and Opportunities

September 2013

### Challenges and Opportunities

All countries of the world have a number of neighbours, but the way Pakistan and Afghanistan are linked geographically, ethnically, culturally and economically are without comparison anywhere. The current bureaucracy in Kabul consist of two third of graduates from Pakistani educational institutions. There are hundreds of Afghan refugees in Pakistan even now. Iran and Pakistan are among the available trade routes for landlocked Afghanistan, however, the Pakistani route is cheaper and historically more established. Afghanistan must always remember that if Pakistan has been part of its problems, those problems also cannot be solved without Pakistan. Afghanistan will suffer most as a result of tense relations with Pakistan. As Pakistan being small suffers more in its tense relations with India, similarly although Pakistan also suffers due to tense relations with Afghanistan but Afghanistan will suffer more being smaller of the two. Pakistan must also remember that it cannot remain unaffected by the chaotic conditions of Afghanistan. As much as Pakistan will benefit most from peace in Afghanistan, it will also be affected by unrest there. Thus better bilateral relations and cooperation is not only a need but a necessity for both.

Until there is peace in Afghanistan, Pakistan's dream of access to Central Asia cannot be fulfilled. Peace in Afghanistan is also required for meeting energy needs of Pakistan. Historically it has been proven that unrest in Afghanistan will also mean a threat to Pakistan's internal security. It is an existential requirement for Pakistan to pave the way for political stability in Afghanistan. Afghanistan must also understand that if it wants to reduce Pakistan's negative role, then it must be mindful of Pakistan's apprehensions and increase Pakistan's economic dependence on it. Pakistan would never want unrest on the route for its trucks and buses to Central Asia that passes through Kabul and Mazar Sharif. Afghan leadership must get out of the past and start a new journey of friendship and cooperation. Pakistan should give up American policy and follow Chinese policy in Afghanistan. Pakistan is pursuing in Afghanistan the same policy that Americans are pursuing in their relations with Pakistan. Due to which, despite many sacrifices, it is negatively perceived in Afghanistan. Pakistan needs to pursue in Afghanistan the policy that China is pursuing in Pakistan. Compared to America, Chinese economic relations with Pakistan are too little, but no one badmouths China in Pakistan. Pakistan should become what China is for Pakistan and Afghans should adopt the same attitude towards Pakistan that

Pakistani's have towards China. Pakistan must sincerely use its influence in Afghanistan for peace and Afghanistan should trust Pakistan rather than America or any other power. Survival and success demands Afghans should help each other rather than others.

If Mulla Mohammed Omar, Hamid Karzai, Gulbadin Hekmatyar, Younis Qanuni, Rasheed Dostum, Ustad Atta Mohammed, Karim Khalili and Ustad Muhaqiq get together then the way for outsiders to interfere in Afghanistan will be shut automatically. Similarly if Afghanistan and Pakistan become friends and listen to each other with sincerity then no one will get opportunity to make them fight each other.



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