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Background Paper



Trust Deficit and Pakistan-Afghanistan Rocky Relations

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CONTENTS

Abbreviations and Acronyms	
Foreword	
About the Author	
Introduction	09
Current State of Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan	11
- Cross-border Terrorism & Border Security Management from Afghanistan and Pakistan	11
- Trilateral Agreements amongst Pakistan, Afghanistan and US	11
- Joint Action Plan	11
- Border Coordination Centers	11
- Tripartite Commission	11
- Tripartite Border Coordination Mechanism	12
- Strategic Partnership Agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan	12
- Economic Integration, Pipeline and Trade opportunities	12
- Return of Afghan Refugees	13
- Water Issue	13
Future of Pak-Afghan Relationship: Between Now and Post-2014	14
Role for the Parliamentarians	15
The Way Forward	16

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CARs	Central Asian Republics
EU	European Union
FATA	Federal Administrated Tribal Areas
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
PAJCCI	Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industries
PTV	Pakistan Television
SAFRAN	States and Frontier Regions
SPA	Strategic Partnership Agreement
TPC	Tripartite Commission
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

FOREWORD

The Background Paper on **Deficit and Pakistan-Afghanistan Rocky Relations** has been commissioned by PILDAT to serve as a background paper for the participating Pakistan and Afghanistan Parliamentarians for the **7th Pakistan-Afghanistan Parliamentarians Dialogue** co-organised by PILDAT and the **Pakistan-Afghanistan Parliamentary Friendship Group, National Assembly of Pakistan**, for December 11-12, 2012.

The background paper has been authored by **Mr. Hasan Khan**, Columnists Dawn Newspaper. The paper highlights factors that contribute to a trust-deficit in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations and how to bridge this deficit. It also underlines the important role that Parliamentarians of the two countries can play to reduce the stresses and trust deficit while promoting good neighbourly relations between the two nations.

As an independent think-tank, PILDAT believes that while diplomatic channels for Dialogue must continue, Parliamentarians from both countries should be facilitated on both sides for a greater interaction and developing a better understanding for resolving issues that lead diplomatic initiatives. It is for this objective that PILDAT has been facilitating Parliamentarians Dialogues.

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 and the Pakistan-Afghanistan Parliamentary Friendship Group, National Assembly of Pakistan.

Islamabad
December 2012

December 2012

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Hasan Khan is currently associated with Dawn Newspaper as a columnist. Mr. Khan has an expertise on issues relating to terrorism, security, peace & conflict and public issues in the Pushtun belt of Pakistan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, FATA) and Afghanistan.

Mr. Hasan Khan has previously served as Director News and Current Affairs Khyber News TV where he has interviewed heads of States including former President Pervez Musharraf and the Afghan President Hamid Karzai. He is the only Pakistani journalist who interviewed Afghan President Hamid Karzai thrice, both at Islamabad and Kabul. He has conducted exclusive interviews with British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, and successive US Deputy Secretaries of State and Assistant Secretaries of State. In addition, he has anchored interviews with ambassadors of the US, EU and UAE, etc., apart from his extensive interaction with the senior leadership of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Mr. Hasan Khan has also served as staff-reporter with The News International in Peshawar and regularly contributed to the paper's political magazine. Previously, he was associated with English daily The Frontier Post Peshawar as a reporter. He has also hosted social and political talk shows for Pakistan Television (PTV) Peshawar Centre during 2001 to 2004

His international exposure includes trips to Germany, India and Afghanistan for participation in various events. He also has the membership of key forums in the sphere related to security, Afghan issues, and war on terror and FATA affairs. Beside this, his visit to the key institutions in the US has also broadened his vision. He is regularly invited to speak on various issues by different think tanks.

December 2012

Introduction

The current state of relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan at the official level can neither be termed as friendly nor brotherly. Historically, the relations between Kabul and Islamabad have remained patchy, inconsistent, erratic and prone to acts of violence and terrorism across the border.

Some recent developments and high level interactions, no doubt, are proving instrumental in bridging the trust deficit between the two countries and bringing them gradually closer to each other with increased level of confidence.

The announcement of the withdrawal of international combat troops by 2014 from Afghanistan has led to mounting pressure on both the capitals; bringing their unstable and unpredictable state of relations into focus of the world.

For the international community, the high level of mistrust and hostile posturing between Pakistan and Afghanistan has remained a source of concern particularly with the approaching of 2014 when the international combat troops depart from Afghanistan and handover responsibility to the Afghan national armed forces.

May be its the growing international pressure or internal security concerns that have led to some major shifts in Pakistan's Afghan policy - signaling Islamabad's softening of stance with noticeable commitments of supporting Afghan peace process with Taliban insurgents.

Pakistan's policy of doing away with the controversial policy of pursuing 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan and pledging to extend support to a 'stable government' – leaving historical stand point of having a 'friendly regime' in Kabul – are considered to be positive changes in its Afghan policy.

This is coupled with releasing of several senior Taliban leaders - and ready to free more - on the demand of Afghan High Council for Peace as a goodwill gesture which further demonstrates Islamabad commitments and seriousness for making the Afghan government succeed in contacts with Taliban. This act of Pakistan has not only increased confidence of the Afghan interlocutors but also attracted the world attention positively.

If the current pace of improvement in Kabul and Islamabad

relations is kept intact, both the countries can reduce trust deficit– the root cause of rocky relations between the two countries.

Since long, both the countries have been the victims of violence and acts of terrorism – Pakistan is second while Afghanistan is on third position among countries sufferings from acts of terrorism and violence according to a recent survey. However instead of putting their act together against a handful of insurgents, both Pakistan and Afghanistan continuously accuse each other of supporting militants in the border regions to the sheer benefits of the militancy.

Despite, Pakistan's unwavering support during the decade of jihad against Soviet Union; leaders of both the countries are deeply suspicious of each other's role in the perpetuation of insurgency and continued violence and acts of terrorism across the border. Pakistan is a-must-mention whenever any Afghan talks of the withdrawal of international combat troop and growing influence of Taliban insurgents in rural and semi-urban areas as posing threat to peace across the country.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are unique countries in the world where thousands of people are crossing the border daily without having proper travel documents. According to official sources, only at Torkham point about twenty to twenty five thousand people are crossing on a daily average –hardly a few hundreds have travel documents. Thousands of others are moving across the Durand Line using the Chaman, Ghulam Khan and Angoor Ada and scores of other frequented and unfrequented routes in Kurram, Tirah, Mohmand, Bajaur, Dir and Chitral districts without being checked for their nationalities.

The movement of such a large number of people across an international border between two countries on daily basis provides rare foundation for building stable and friendly relationship. However, on the contrary, Islamabad and Kabul have remained hostile to each other since Pakistan came into being. Both the countries have been stuck in history. Afghanistan's reluctance to support Pakistan's inclusion in the UN – more than six decades ago - over its claims on Pakistani Pashtun areas and not recognizing Durand Line as an international boundary is still giving Pakistani establishment a justification to destabilise Kabul whenever an opportunity arises.

On a trip to Mazar-e-Sharif – travelling by road from

December 2012

Torkham– and interacting with Afghans Diasporas of businessmen, Parliamentarians, political workers, jihadi commanders and ordinary men on the streets, one observed, deep rooted hatred among Afghans who seemed to be convinced that Pakistan is responsible for destruction of Afghanistan. Most unfortunately, the political leadership - across the ethnic divide – is exploiting the anti-Pakistan sentiments by joining the chorus of 'blame-Pakistan' for all the troubles befallen on Afghans for their political, ethnic or group interests.

December 2012

Current State of Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan

Cross-border Terrorism & Border Security Management from Afghanistan and Pakistan

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have always been prone to casualty as any single act of violence or terrorism across the border can spoil the whole exercise. By releasing some senior Taliban leaders Pakistan has shown willingness to cooperate with Afghanistan in reaching out to the Taliban insurgents. However, at the same time, Pakistan's Interior Minister Mr. Rehman A. Malik opted to use very tough language against Afghan President Hamid Karzai accusing him of supporting anti Pakistan militants in Afghanistan.

Pakistan is accusing the Afghan government of harbouring anti-Pakistan militants particularly those led by Mullah Fazlullah and some Baloch insurgents, while Afghanistan and the international community – whose militaries are fighting Taliban militia - are accusing Pakistan of providing safe havens to Taliban insurgents and facilitating the dreaded Haqqani network to launch attacks deep inside the Afghan territory.

President Hamid Karzai – even criticizing US policy of fighting Taliban on the Afghan soil - has asked the international community several times in the past to attack Taliban hideouts and their training camps across the border - implicitly pointing toward's Pakistan tribal territories.

Pakistan resorted to indiscriminate bombing and firing artillery shells on Afghan villages close to the border on the pretext of targeting militants' safe havens – further tensing relations with Kabul. The Afghan border forces are also resorting to firing artillery shells and heavy weapons targeting the border posts inside Pakistani territory sometime causing casualties of the civilians and security officials.

The New Media Journal recently reported that over the past several months, the Taliban and allied terror groups have increased attacks on remote areas in northeastern Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan. These attacks are often launched from across the border by members of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban in conjunction with groups such as al Qaeda and the Lashkar-e-Taiba.

All bad things along the border are happening despite having a number of bilateral and trilateral understandings and forums for reducing border infiltrations developed by all the stakeholders through mutual understanding.

Trilateral Agreements amongst Pakistan, Afghanistan and US

Following the increased attacks from the Taliban insurgents leading to deep rifts in relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the United States took the lead and worked on several initiatives to reduce tensions between the two countries and encourage them to concentrate on countering the insurgency. The US government succeeded in inking a trilateral agreement between Islamabad, Kabul and Washington for better coordination in fight against insurgency in the border areas, discouraging cross border infiltrations and finding peaceful solution to the Afghan conflict. Under this trilateral arrangement, the three officials of the countries regularly meet – some time at the summit level – and debate issues that causing misunderstanding amongst them.

Joint Action Plan

In 2009, amid heightened tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, a plan – known as Joint Action Plan – was designed with U.S. support to pursue joint efforts on issues of counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, law enforcement and border security and management with increased cooperation. (US State dept. 2009)

Border Coordination Centers

In order to keep the officers of the three militaries engaged in regular contacts on daily basis for better coordination in the fight against insurgents along the border, both Pakistan and Afghanistan with the cooperation of ISAF opened six Border Coordination Centres on both sides of the border. The regular meeting of the military officers on daily basis will have to primarily focus on ensuring that terrorists do not cross over to either side whenever operations are being conducted against them in the two countries.

Tripartite Commission

The most important of the contacts for improved coordination between the forces across the border is the formation of Tripartite Commission where chiefs of Pakistan, Afghanistan and ISAF militaries regularly meet for consultations and stock taking of efforts against Taliban insurgents and Pakistani militants. In the Tripartite Commission meeting a free and frank discussion is conducted and new policy devised according to the needs

December 2012

and demands of the situation at the time.

Tripartite Border Coordination Mechanism

In the 36th meeting of the Tripartite Commission (TPC) at the Afghan Ministry of Defence in Kabul in November 2012, the heads of Pakistan, Afghanistan and ISAF forces signed a key document 'Tripartite Border Coordination Mechanism' to improve border coordination. The three sides agreed to continue cooperation for enduring success, peace and stability on both sides of the border. The mechanism is supposed to focus on enhancing measures along the Pak-Afghan border and improve cooperation at operational and tactical levels.

However, despite the availability of these forums and opportunities for high level interactions, so far, Afghanistan, Pakistan and US have failed to control extremists operating along the border due to different priorities and personal animosities. Cross-border violence and acts of terrorism are still the major irritant bedeviling relations between the two countries.

Strategic Partnership Agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan

Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) is the major missing link in Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship. Despite being so close and interdependent upon each other, consensus has not yet been achieved on signing the SPA. Kabul has already signed long term strategic partnership agreements with a number of countries including US, India, Australia, Germany and UK. Fresh talks have been initiated for working on the agreement, however, as in the past, Kabul has again put some conditions like releasing of more Taliban leaders for signing the agreement with Pakistan.

To many critics in Afghanistan; SPA with Pakistan is something secondary as before entering into such an important agreement, they demand Pakistan to demonstrate practically its full support for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. This indicates that Kabul may be considering Pakistan a brother country but not a friendly country. Afghans generally look at Pakistan with suspicion and its extraordinary interest in SPA is interpreted as Pakistan might be thinking of having a leverage to counter the Indian influence – which has already signed SPA with Kabul last year.

The SPA – if signed - will have significant impact on relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan by providing a forum and a framework to address all genuine concerns of both the countries against each other. Recently a significant progress has been made during the visit of Afghan Foreign Minister where Pakistan Foreign Minister Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar has presented a draft of the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) to Dr. Zalmai Rassoul.

Economic Integration, Pipeline and Trade opportunities

Afghanistan is a landlocked country sharing boundaries with six countries. Pakistan is at a unique position where the Afghan market is considered to be the extension of Pakistani markets for Pakistan-made products. Afghanistan is hugely dependent on the imports of everything including capital goods, food items, petroleum products, consumer goods and materials used in construction industries like cement, steel, wood, paints, glass and other accessories. Millions of Afghans who spent decades in Pakistan as refugees have developed a taste and familiarity with Pakistani products and prefer to use the same.

The Kabul-based Pajhwok news services which files a regular weekly market survey in Kabul and other major cities of Afghanistan reports that 80% of food and construction items in the Afghan market comprise Pakistani exports goods.

Zubair Motiwala, President of Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industries (PAJCCI) – while addressing the first meeting of PAJCCI disclosed that the existing trade and business opportunities between Pakistan and Afghanistan have the capacity to enhance current trade volume of US \$ 3 billion to US \$ 6 billion in the next three years.¹ The unofficial trade between the two countries is more than double of the official and undocumented trade. If proper measures are taken to regulate the trade and business activities between the two countries, more and more revenue can be generated for the exchequers of both countries.

Peace in the region is a prerequisite for both the countries to take benefits from trade, business and investment opportunities. Historically, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the trade routes between Asia, Central Asia and Europe. Both provide equal trade routes opportunities to each

1. Pak-Afghan trade can be enhanced to \$6b, The Nation, March 14, 2012, <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/business/14-Mar-2012/pak-afghan-trade-can-be-enhanced-to-6b>

December 2012

other. Afghanistan provides overland routes for Pakistani exports to CARs and Eastern European countries; while Pakistan provides the same to Afghanistan to exports goods to its traditional Indian markets and the rest of the world via Pakistan sea ports.

Beyond Afghanistan, there is a huge market of Central Asian States lying untapped for Pakistani goods. Pakistan can get cheaper supplies of electricity, fuel and gas from the resource-rich CARs by laying electricity transmission lines and pipelines for oil and gas supplies via Afghanistan.

However, progress and implementation of the trade and investment agreements between Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States are hamstrung by regional insecurity and instability. Pakistan has been already working since long on Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Electricity Transmission Line, Extension of Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Treaty to Central Asia & India, Free Trade Agreement between Afghanistan-Pakistan, Investment Protection Agreement between Afghanistan-Pakistan, and opening of more trade routes towards Afghanistan.

Return of Afghan Refugees

Of the five million Afghan refugees who fled to Pakistan following the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan in 1980, more than two millions are still living in Pakistan. By December 2012, nearly 1.7 million Afghans nationals have been reported to be living in Pakistan legally, while an estimated 1 million more are staying illegally.

Almost 70% of the present Afghan refugees have been born and raised in Pakistan during the last 30 years but they are still counted as citizens of Afghanistan. Pakistan provided unprecedented hospitality to the Afghan refugees who were treated just its own citizens with no restrictions on their movement across the country for more than three decades now. There is no precedent in the world where such a huge number of foreign nationals have been living in peace in a host country for such a long time.

However, considered to be a burden on the weak economy and inadequate social infrastructure in Pakistan and also adding to the security problems, Islamabad is stressing on immediate return of Afghan nationals to their country on the expiry of agreement with UNHCR and the Afghan government by the end of 2012.

On December 3, 2012, when SAFFRON Minister Eng.

Shaukatullah Khan met President Karzai in Kabul, Pakistan renewed its demand from Afghanistan to take steps to create conducive conditions for voluntary and dignified return of refugees to Afghanistan. Afghanistan's position on refugees is a voluntary and dignified repatriation; and Pakistan too is not using any force for expelling the refugees, in such a situation the process of repatriation may take years – some say decades.

Water Issue

The water issue may turn out to be major issue of contention between the two countries once the Afghan conflict is settled. One of Pakistan's major rivers – River Kabul – and some of its tributaries, are flowing down from Afghanistan eastern Nangarhar and Kunar provinces. Though both the countries share water resources, however there is no water agreement or treaty between them.

The growing perceptions among the Afghans that Pakistan is blocking every step to build small or large hydropower dams on rivers Kabul or Kunar in the eastern Afghanistan zone is agitating Pakistan's official circles. Pakistan has also the apprehensions that in case of restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan, Kabul may start constructing large dams and hydropower generations units on River Kabul and River Kunar or use its waters for irrigations purposes.

At the moment, the issue of water is in cold storage as other issues are more important on the scene for both the countries. Neither the Afghan government nor the country's political leadership has ever agitated the water issue or have expressed any intention regarding checking or controlling the waters flowing from Afghanistan down to Pakistan.

However, in general, Afghans consider the water issue as Pakistan's concern – which might be true as in the absence of water treaty; any conflict over the water usage between the two countries in the future will be more harmful for Pakistan because Afghanistan being an upper riparian has the first right over the use of water.

Future of Pak-Afghan Relationship: Between Now and Post-2014

No doubt relations between Kabul and Islamabad are improving at the moment with some positive developments leading to growing level of confidence and trust. The leadership of both the countries needs to realise the fact that the onus of bringing peace to the region primarily lies on the shoulders of Kabul and Islamabad and their handling of the pre and post 2014 – a year when foreign combat troops will depart from Afghanistan.

Islamabad is better positioned to play a leading role in settling the Afghan conflict by making sincere efforts and helping the Afghans in holding elections in 2014 to enable Kabul to form a stable democratic regime – a step which will definitely create a lot of goodwill and trust for Pakistan among Afghans.

The scheduled 2014 transition and elections are considered to be the issues of survival for Afghanistan. A successful election and smooth transition mean that Afghanistan will have another 4-5 years with a very minimal presence of foreign troops in non-combat role. A stable and people-represented regime in Kabul will be definitely in a strong position to own the ongoing peace process with Taliban insurgents and take other issues confidently and independently.

In case of choosing the path of confrontation like closing eyes on the activities of Taliban insurgents in its territory; Pakistan will definitely have a chaotic Afghanistan – an enemy of all and friend of none. The year 2013 can be rightly considered as a golden year for Pakistan. Islamabad has to take every possible step to help the Afghans stabilise the country and reach out to insurgents for peace negotiations – essential for a stable and friendly regime in Kabul.

However, it will also be too simplistic to leave everything to Pakistan for lasting peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan cannot be declared as solely responsible for all the problems faced by the Afghans during the last decade. First the Afghan regime and political leadership across the ethnic lines have to demonstrate its sincerity and respond to Pakistan concerns vis a vis cross border infiltrations, negative propaganda and scapegoating Pakistan for the failures of Afghan regime and international forces in securing the country.

Kabul must take stock of its current relations with the neighboring countries - particularly with India – keeping in view the sensitivities between New Delhi and Islamabad. Pakistan has legitimate concerns of its own as it cannot accept a permanent threat to its territorial integrity and - rightly or wrongly – Islamabad feels increasingly encircled by India and India's regional allies.

The Afghan government and the United States need to objectively analyze their policy blunders committed during the last decade leading to their collective failures in addressing issues like insecurity, rampant corruption and maladministration and growing hatred among various ethnicities – the most dangerous of all threatening existence of the country.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime, the incumbent west-backed government in Kabul and its international allies have failed to guarantee physical security of the people and improving their economic condition. The situation might have been improved in some parts of the country – particularly in northern regions – however, in most parts of the country like in southern and eastern regions, Afghans have not seen the dividends of peace and shares in the developmental work.

Role for the Parliamentarians

In any democratic society, the elected representatives have dominant role in influencing of state policies, influencing the governments and molding public opinions. In case of Pakistan and Afghanistan's rocky relations, marred by huge mistrust, greater responsibilities lie on the shoulders of the elected representatives.

The role played by the national Parliaments of both countries during the past ten years in addressing the Pak-Afghan conflict or border situation is not worth mentioning. The elected representatives in Kabul and more in Islamabad seemed satisfied to have left the Pak-Afghan contentious issues exclusively in the hands of militaries.

Regional security and stability are the most important issues which definitely need the institutional involvement of both Parliaments. Increased contacts between Parliaments and Parliamentarians can no doubt reduce the prevailing tensions and trust deficit – a pre-requisite for stable relationship – between the people and governments.

The national Parliaments of Pakistan and Afghanistan have due representations from all segments of society including women, religious scholars, religious minorities, former jihadi and military commanders, etc., who can play a central role in addressing certain vital issues facing both the countries. Additionally, a sizeable number of Afghan Parliamentarians have spent years of their lives in Pakistan as refugees and have lot of love and regard for Pakistan.

The contentious issues as border security, smugglings and cross-border infiltrations can be debated at joint or specialised committee meetings in a mature way and frank environment with honesty and sincerity.

If the issue of mistrusts is adequately addressed; all the other major irritants between Pakistan and Afghanistan can be handled easily. This can only be achieved by promoting and encouraging regular contacts between the Parliamentarians of both the countries who can play a positive role in discouraging the anti-Pakistan or anti-Afghanistan propagandas using media and other social forums.

December 2012

The Way Forward

For Pakistan and Afghanistan, there is no other option except working for peace and stability jointly. The countries not only share geography, history, long-unmark border and ethnicities, but also have common destinies. The reality has already been proved by the level of involvement and subsequent human and material losses suffered by Pakistan which are in no way less than their Afghan brothers and sisters during the decades' long conflict. Besides Pakistan and Afghanistan have five other neighbours sharing boundaries but no other country except Pakistan shared the burdens of Afghans.

Despite troubles and difficulties in relationship between the governments and animosity at the level of political leadership, an ethnically Tajik, Uzbek or Hazara parents even from the north will still prefer to carry their sibling to be treated at hospitals in Pakistan instead Tajikistan or Uzbekistan – just close to their home towns. Standing at any border crossing points between Pakistan and Afghanistan one cannot identify who is going where; as very few of the thousands crossing the border care to carry travel documents on each side.

If there are challenges ahead, there are opportunities also for the people on both sides of the border. It is the responsibility of the respective leaderships to turn challenges into opportunities by turning new pages in relationship focusing more on cooperation and mutual development than wars and animosity- a game of losers.

The year 2013 is a golden year of opportunities and challenges for the both democratic regimes in Kabul and Islamabad prior to the departure of international combat troops from Afghanistan. Sincere efforts are needed to take both the nations out of the quagmire of extremism and wars and put them on path of peace, progress and prosperity.

The year 2014 is a year of transition for Afghans and Afghanistan. It is going to be a real transition to democracy and self rule when Afghan will be voting for electing a new head of state in the country's third consecutive elections. It will be a transition of security responsibilities from international combat troops to Afghan National Security Forces.

Demonstrating maturity and sincerity, the leadership of Pakistan and Afghanistan must take the lead in cooperating

with each other to resolve the menace of insurgency through peace talks without waiting for other to intervene. They have to create an environment that – by 2014 when the international forces have departed - Afghan national security forces will not be fighting the Afghans (Taliban) but ready to help and assist the civilian administration in rehabilitation and reconstruction of the war battered country.

First and foremost Kabul and Islamabad have to accommodate and accept each other's genuine concerns and grievances with open hearts and minds. Without being pre-occupied by the pre-conceived ideas and baggage of past, the leadership of both the countries ought to share a list of 'dos and don'ts' and their respective capacities to influence insurgents across the border for peace and stability.

On the priority list, both the countries address the issues of immediate concerns including cross border infiltrations, safe havens and training centres of militants across the border.

Pakistan should satisfy the Afghans who are suspicious that Islamabad is providing logistics support to Taliban insurgents allegedly for having leverage and countering the perceived growing Indian influence in Kabul. Afghans shall also have to look sincerely into Pakistani concerns of religious militants and Baloch insurgents using the Afghan land for attacks inside Pakistan and the increasing Indian influence Pakistan considers to be detrimental to security of its western border.

Pakistan also feels sidelined by Kabul's reluctance to sign a Strategic Partnership Agreement while having already signed such agreements with a number of countries including with Pakistan arch rival India. The SPA between Pakistan and Afghanistan needs to be finalised on the priority basis so that all the current and future contentious issues are taken up for discussion and ultimate solution within the SPA framework.

One thing which both the countries have to realise sooner rather than later is that the years 2013 and 2014 are offering to Pakistanis and Afghans the now-or-never situation; success against insurgency and militancy lies in working jointly not in accusing each other blindly.



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