Chapter: 5

Conclusion

In Afghanistan, we do what we can. In Iraq, we do what we must. 362

The words of Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff reflect the complacent and obstinate policy being adopted in Afghanistan. But this was not mere rhetoric. USA has spent only 28.8% of total aid pledged by the end of 2009. 363 And the half heartedness is evident on the ground as Afghanistan fares poorly in its social indicators. It ranks 172nd out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index, 2012. Transparency International 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index put Afghanistan on 174th out of 176 countries. Suicide Bombings have increased. In 2013, Afghanistan became the lead producer and cultivator of opium globally. But all is not bleak in the country. 13 long years of NATO troops sojourn has improved the country’s social scale too, although marginally. In Human Development Report 2013, it has registered the fastest growth in South Asia. 364 From 1 million in 2001, the children’s education has risen to 8.7 million in 2011 and more than 2 million are girls whose education was banned under Taliban rule. Maternal Mortality Rate also declined from 1600 in 2001 to 327 per 100,000 live births in 2011. 365 But much more needs to be done for conflict resolution and peace building in Afghanistan. Chapter 2 Conflict in Afghanistan: Genesis and Dimensions articulately charts out the underlying problems. Political and institutional fragility is the overarching reason for the continuing turmoil in the country. This accompanied with foreign interference which has violated the sovereignty and integrity of the country. Thirdly, deficit of aid and assistance to execute modernisation programmes fell flat. Fourthly, the geo strategic importance led Afghanistan to earn notoriety of ‘Land of Routes’. Therefore, looking at the problems one can conclude that the country needs a prescription of liberal peace and peace as governance. Liberal peace will constitute victor’s peace,


institutional and constitutional peace. After 13 years of war, victor’s peace is still relevant in Afghanistan because the conservative and orthodox Taliban forces which were defeated in 2001 have occupied Southern and Eastern Afghanistan. Suicide bombings are on the rise. Resurgence of Taliban is apprehending the domestic and international community and predicting an outbreak of civil war and worsening security situation. Institutional peace is also imperative but it is not pervasive. Institutional build up remained confined to urban areas but are non functional in the hinterlands. Even in urban areas corruption, patronage and nepotism have marred the functioning of novel institutions. Constitutional Peace is also relevant as in Chapter 3: International Initiatives in Afghanistan, Peace Making theory was discussed elaborately. It mentions the major loopholes while drafting the peace agreement or the constitution of the country. Peace Making should not be monopolised by certain victorious sections rather than it needs to be well represented and rational clauses need to be accommodated. Peace as governance model as proposed by Richmond’s is the fundamental necessity. Lederach’s concept of sustainable peace can only be achieved with the focus on peace as governance. Civil Society needs to be strengthened. In Chapter 4: Civil Society in Afghanistan, mentions the clash of interests between NGOs and traditional civil society of Afghanistan. There is a need to sort out and resolve the collisions and build peace between them.

Afghanistan is nearing the NATO troops reduction in 2014. The climate in the country looks uncertain and apprehensive. There are talks of civil war. There are talks of Taliban taking over. There are talks of fragmentation of Afghanistan. And there are also talks of continuation of USA troops in the country. Which of these predictions will come true only time will tell? But here I have suggested some political, economic and social measures which can help in attaining conflict resolution and peace building in the country. The measures can be divided into short term and long term. Short term measures will include review of constitution making, peace agreements and strengthening security. Whereas long term will include strengthening civil society, improving social indicators of health, poverty and education. Achieving short term will aid and accelerate in achievement of long term goals. Political and institutional peace will surely enhance governance peace. And it’s the failure and weakness of institutions that have failed Afghanistan. So, fair and just institutional build up should be the priority of international community. Working if not robust economy should also be central.
Dependence on aid and assistance makes a country dependent and vulnerable to outside powers. And thirdly, focus will be on long term measures for a sustainable peace.

**Short Term Measures**

**Political Solution**

Amin Saikal has said that the only real solution to the problem in Afghanistan is the political one. And I agree. Whether it was Geneva accords or the Bonn agreement, the affected parties were not included and the real issue was sidelined. The exit of USA troops is nearing and the question is what should be done next to hold the country together in terms of security, economy and polity.

Though criticisms have mounted over the issue of holding negotiations with Taliban but this is a pragmatic one. USA may have divided Taliban into moderate and extremists, but US have dried up with all other options too. US have spent militarily, economically and politically but violence seems unabated. So the proposal and decision of having negotiations with Taliban is all a left over option. In 2001, when US attacked Afghanistan, Taliban government was controlling Afghanistan. And Taliban came to power when the Northern Alliance was not able to take hold over the entire country. And also to arrest violence and conflict which was inflicting Afghanistan since Soviet invasion. Afghanistan is a country of fear less, freedom loving and autonomous people. Installation of puppet regime will not be accepted by large and for long after US exit. Exclusion of an opposing party in 2001 is a mistake which US has committed at a great cost. And over it, US after toppling Taliban regime confined its military to urban areas and did not work up its way to eliminate Taliban.\(^{366}\) Since the resources are exhausted, the option is to open public talks with Taliban who are waiting for US to leave and execute its plan of action. Political talks need to be held of not only Taliban but of all opposing parties which will represent the interests of all sections. Media in Afghanistan, though at nascent stage, is also strengthening its roots. Civil Society, if not pervasive, is able to take up relevant issues and is working towards it. Afghanistan has reported comparatively significant progress.\(^{367}\) It also constitutes significant

\(^{366}\)For more Details, please Refer Chapter : 2.

\(^{367}\)Ibid
young population. Afghanistan cannot remain isolated from globalisation for long. Hard core repressive policies of Taliban will not be accepted by Afghans by large. Taliban have also been seen to switching sides in terms of ideology. When in 1991, Taliban’s aim was to remove a godless, communist Soviet Union’s puppet regime. And after prolonged fighting, Taliban was able to win over them. We also need to accept the reality that Taliban have been educated in Pakistani madrassas. And the country, in its modern period, has not had the pervasive education system. So Taliban imposed what they learnt and believed in. And the Afghans were forced to accept it.

The international condition has drastically changed. And to evade an issue from condemnation and eulogy of international society is difficult. Therefore, talking in straight terms with Taliban and laying equal emphasis on other opposing parties will help in concluding a balanced and comprehensive talk. Talking to a defeated party is beyond the policy of US. But US, if not publicly then at least privately, accept that a war has no victors but only losers. And US’s image of the supporter and promoter of human rights have been affected with the casualties in Afghanistan running into millions. Therefore, talks is the only option left and a renewed military attack or approach is just out of the question with the international economic crisis looming over and other pressing problems to be dealt to. Afghanistan does not belong to Hamid Karzai or Ahraf Ghani solely. So exit of US troops cannot hand over the reins of power singularly to Pashtun men who have taken over charge as President. Looting of the resources of country the latest being Kabul Bank Scandal is eroding the trust of Afghans and infuriating the opposing parties who is tasting dust in the hinterland whereas Karzai and his allies in support of US and his military has enjoyed the political power and financial resources of the country. Talking to opposing parties including Taliban will put confidence and end their alienation. This can only help Afghanistan from slipping into turmoil and turbulence.

**Banking on International Community**

US has lot of homework to do before it pack its bag from Afghanistan. Foreign interference has been the major irritant in Afghanistan. The crisis has been exacerbated due to continuous intrusion and interference into its territory, polity and economy. The rationality and cooperation amongst international community will help in rebuilding the country in a long
and sincere way. The positive engagement of the international community will help in resolving their conflict and building peace. The neighbouring countries need to realise that an unstable Afghanistan is a mess not only for Afghanistan but the crisis will also spill to their borders. And the US here needs to play a positive hegemonic role to bring the countries flanking Afghanistan to the table.

First country US needs to change its policy and approach is with Iran. US have considered Iran to be a part of ‘Axis of evil’ and a notorious nuclear power. It has also imposed sanctions on Iran for its nuclear policy. Though Iran had extended its good hand to share a positive relation with US but the latter has not reciprocated positively. Instead it is working on building a negative image of Iran and pitting countries against her. US need to stop this for sake of Afghanistan. Afghanistan will be what international community makes of it. The onus of a peaceful and stable Afghanistan lies as much on international community as on Afghans. Iran has responded positively in containing Afghanistan problem. It faces a mammoth problem of influx of refugees spreading crime, using resources of locals and also adding to the problem of Iranian authorities. Secondly, the drug problem also needs a well deserved effort. These twin problems are haunting Iran and she needs a considerable solution. US, to save its face, can enter into talks with Iran and if not enter at least implicitly support the efforts taken by Iran in diffusing the crisis.

Pakistan comes next. Pashtunistan is the problem Pakistan is not able to get over it. And Pakistan fears that if Afghanistan is able to come out of the impending crisis, the Pashtuns will demand its own land ‘The Pashtun land’. This is only a way of Pakistan to continue making military relevant to its public. Afghanistan will not face any fragmentation in its State. Though Afghanistan is composed of diverse ethnicities but the Afghans are also loyal to the Afghan land. It has faced more than three decades of long war but the Afghanistan has not shown any signs of fragmentation. Only the fears have prospered among scholars and writers over the fragmentation of country. The neighbouring countries too support their own ethnicities as they did post Soviet withdrawal in 1991 but their aim is to protect their ethnicities from the discrimination and also persecution from the dominant section but never with the aim of secession. The neighbouring countries too did not want the troubled seceded part to be taken over by them. So the question of splitting and secession does not arise. And
Pakistan and other neighbouring countries need to take comfort in this fact. There have been ethnic wars but prominent was post 1991 when the flanking countries were fearful of the threat to their ethnic community in Afghanistan. If the international community sits together and pledge not to intervene, foster and fuel the ethnic ignite, much problem of Afghanistan can be solved. Pakistan should concentrate on its own domestic terrorism rather than making its military internationally relevant.

Moscow too cannot be left out. Extremism in Afghanistan will be spilled over to neighbouring countries. Penetration of militants into Central Asia and Chechnya is a greatest worry for Moscow. Permission to allow transit of NATO aid through Russia affirms their apprehension. Russia does not want Taliban to become party in the rebuilding process as for their repressive and hard core policies. China is also concerned about militantism given its restive Xinjiang province. China is also investing in the trade and economic matters in Afghanistan. Ayanak copper mines, the second largest untapped resource, have the investment of China which will be the biggest infrastructure project in the country. Positive engagement of the big players is the need of hour. India, though separated by Pakistan, need to keep positively engaging in Afghanistan by building roads, power lines, schools, colleges and hospitals. The largest project undertaken by India is building of road in southern Nimroz area that provides a link for landlocked Afghanistan to port of Chahabar. This road serves to reduce dependence of Afghanistan on Pakistan for its transport links. India cannot and should not counter Pakistan militarily but continue to engage and involve positively.

Saudi Arabia, one among the three countries to establish diplomatic relations with Mullah Omar government. Taliban’s Deobandi theological ideology is close to Saudi’s Wahabbism. Saudi Arab in cooperation with Pakistan has helped to shape the policy for Afghanistan. Since 2001, Saudi Arabia has been cautious in its dealing with the country but Taliban would prefer the Arabic country to be included in the reconciliation process. Saudi Arabia too can contribute immensely in the reconciliation process. The support of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is also required in the rebuilding process.

And lastly, SAARC, if it till now has been tagged as irrelevant and defunct, can now come to the mainstream and establish its importance. Afghanistan is a SAARC member. And SAARC
can be a platform for Afghanistan issue to be discussed and engage in resolution process. Its importance can’t be undermined.

**Long Term Measures**

**Security**

After 13 years of long wars, presence of 150,000 international troops and expenditure of more than $32 billion, security is still a major concern for Afghanistan and international community. Resurgence of Taliban, suicide bombing and bombing of civilian areas are adding to the already deteriorated condition. Afghan National Army now numbers more than 132,000 and the police force is nearly 85,000 along with thousands of intelligence operatives and border guards. But they are currently facing a highly discouraging atmosphere leading to a lowering of their morale. Attrition rates are higher. The “rate of recruits leaving is far worse than targets set by coalition leaders amounting to 63,000 every year or more than a third of the current size of the army”³⁶⁹. The security force lacks air power, fire support and operational capabilities and has insufficient access to logistics. There is a need to well equip the security forces and shape them into an effective deterrent to current internal and external problems.

**Economy**

World Bank estimated that 97% of Afghanistan’s $15.7 billion Gross Domestic Product comes from international military and development aid and spending in the country by foreign troops. And the economy is contracting since the troops are leaving.³⁷⁰ Donors need not suffer from donor fatigue and continue supporting Afghanistan to rev up its economy.

There is a need to boost and encourage private sector investment and involvement in Afghanistan. A survey has shown that Afghan firms tend to have higher output per worker

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than in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan but only a third of output of small firms in India and Pakistan.\textsuperscript{371} In 2004, Afghan firms invested only marginally less than the rate for small firms in China.\textsuperscript{372} There is a need to improve the investment climate. Electricity shortages need to be arrested. Ease of access to land and finance, curbing corruption and improving security should also be focussed upon. Other constraints of anti competitive behaviour, customs and trade regulations, regulatory policy, taxation, telecommunications and transport need to be reduced. To cope with insecurity, firms hire private security services or negotiate agreements with local power brokers. This puts an additional burden of cost on the firms. And many times, established firms in support of local power brokers did not permit new firms to break their monopoly. This causes anti competitive behaviour and impacts business growth. Bureaucratic procedures and unnecessary taxes need to be done away with. Restructuring of state owned banks and implementation of legal and credit systems are required. Building of industrial parks and free trade zones, where the authority of state can be extended, can be facilitated.

Afghanistan is rich in mineral resources. Development of mineral deposits such as copper, iron and gemstones offers considerable potential. There has to be a transparent bidding process with transparent system of rights, royalties and taxes. This needs to be accompanied by a robust regulatory system and the government capacity to implement it.

\textbf{Agriculture and Rural Productivity}

85\% of the population lives in rural areas and 67\% is employed as a labour force. Though Afghan economy is primarily agricultural only 12 percent or 7.9 million hectares is arable land.\textsuperscript{373} Wheat, the primary cereal crop, covers two-thirds of the cultivated area, with most production (70-80\%) on irrigated land. Wheat yields are low. So there is a need to focus on enhancing productivity. New techniques should be brought in. Increased application of fertilisers, use of improved seeds, rehabilitation of irrigation, greater mechanization, greater use of weed, disease and pest management need to be brought in.


\textsuperscript{372} Ibid

\textsuperscript{373} Ibid P: 113.
For creating more employment opportunities and increasing rural productivity, off farm activities need to be encouraged. Fruit processing, production of agricultural inputs and handicrafts will facilitate in opening more avenues of employment. Establishing orchards and vineyards and investing in processing and market development will reduce the agricultural constraints for growth and prosperity. Livestock improvement program will aid in improving the health of animals which then can be used in supply of food like milk and eggs. In the long term once security has been established the picturesque and snow clad mountains of Afghanistan can also be turned into a tourism spot for generating revenue for locals.

Agriculture in Afghanistan also needs to gear up with its infrastructural deficiencies. Rehabilitation of existing irrigation system that has been destroyed in wars and droughts needs to be carried out. New irrigation projects needs to identified and assessed. Microfinance in India has been successful in providing loans to farmers. This can be scaled up. Bank-e-Milli Afghan (National Bank) and Pashtany Tejaraty Bank (Pashtany Commercial Bank) could be rehabilitated into a modern bank operated by private management company.

Roads need to be improved to carry agricultural products to market. Improvement in knowledge services will help in updating the farmers of new technology and new services.

Development of agriculture and promotion of rural productivity will help in weeding out opium production.

**Social Input**

Governance need to be made effective. Corruption, patronage system and nepotism need to be mitigated. Afghans have hope for a vibrant and prosperous future. This need not be emaciated. Coordination needs to be build among various ministries and aid delivering networks.

Schools and colleges need to be expanded. Civil society and international community need to continue its support to the Afghanistan. Health Services need to be emphasised. Transport connectivity needs to be improved.

Daoud’s aim of modernisation can be accomplished only gradually but not instantly. The implementation of reform has to be slow and permanent. Holistic support is required by
domestic and international players to restore the beauty in Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Durrani in praise of Afghanistan’s beauty once said:

Whatever countries I conquer in the world, I would never forget your beautiful gardens. When I remember the summits of your beautiful mountains, I forget the greatness of the Delhi throne.