



FATA Research Centre
A Guest Lecture Report
On

POST
WITHDRAWAL
SCENARIO IN
AFGHANISTAN; ITS
IMPACT ON FATA

The complex correlation of FATA issue with the crisis in Afghanistan gives optimistic view on the grounds that the US has announced end of the crisis in Afghanistan where it will withdraw combat forces from Afghanistan in 2014. Presumably the end of the crises in Afghanistan should bring peace by eliminating conflict in FATA but to how far it is possible is million dollar question.

Acknowledgment

FATA Research Centre was able to hold a series of guest lectures on the significant issues of FATA in collaboration with The Royal Danish Embassy in Pakistan.

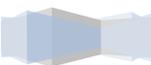
FRC is privileged to thank the honorable guest speakers who took out time from their busy schedules and contributed their research intellects on the issue of "Post Withdrawal Scenario in Afghanistan and its Impacts on FATA.

FRC also would like to thank guests from academia, media and research for their presence and valuable participation in the event.

FRC owes to thank its team for contributing all their efforts in holding the event.

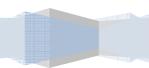
This report is based on the content of speeches and addresses by the speakers and participants at the seminar.

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Contents

Summary of the guest lecture	4
Background of the Issue.....	4
Profiles of the guest speakers.....	6
Mr. Hassan Khan:	6
Mr. Asmatullah Khan Wazir:	6
Key notes from guest lecturers' speech:	7
By Hassan Khan: Overview of the post withdrawal situations in Afghanistan	7
By Asmatullah Khan Wazir: Post withdrawal scenario inside Pakistan; Pak and Afghan Relations	7
Way forward	9
Appendices.....	10
Agenda	10
Press release	11
Pictorial Insight	12
Works Cited.....	13



Post withdrawal scenario in Afghanistan; its impact on FATA

Summary of the guest lecture

The guest lecture held at FATA Research Centre (FRC) on the topic of *“Post withdrawal scenario in Afghanistan impact on FATA”* is the part of series of lectures by guest speakers exploring ways to achieve peace and culture of tolerance. FRC invites guests who are specialists on subject so that they may give a clearer picture of the issue. On the basis of the expert opinion FRC suggests a way forward.

In this effort FRC organized a guest lecture on the aforementioned topic keeping in view that the expected change scenario after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan to be strategized properly, because the US withdrawal is going to affect Pakistan especially the FATA.

Hassan Khan, an expert on Afghan affairs, discussed the Afghan issue in details while covering different aspects of the issue. He has traveled frequently across Pakistan and Afghanistan border therefore he has comprehensive understanding of both land and people along with their culture of the territory in question.

According to Hassan Khan the issue of FATA is as misunderstood as the issue of Afghanistan. This is the main reason of the continuance of violence in both regions. There is another reason as well of the nonstop fight in the region; that is the ownership of the conflict whereby nobody is ready to own the responsibility of the conflict. Third reason for this persistence unrest in the region is the trust deficit among the major stakeholders (Pakistan, Afghanistan and US) in the region.

The lecture generates a debate among those who have interests in the issue. The participants included field researcher associated with FRC, students, independent researchers and analysts.

The participants of the debate denounced the Pakistan’s policies towards Afghanistan especially at the time of Musharaf-Rule and also said that such policies must not be repeated again in the post withdrawal scenario.

Background of the Issue

Many of the surveys end up with the notion that one of the fundamental arguments presented by Taliban for their existence and new recruitments in FATA is their fight (*Jihad*) against America (FRC, 2012). But the people of FATA are paying a huge price for this so called *Jihad* while compromising on their principles and traditionally inherited codes of life (*Pashtunwali*) (FRC , 2012). It is very difficult for the tribal people to give up their local codes being extremely desirable to them for smooth functioning in the society (SBF, 2009). Majority of research materials indicated that it is not only the internal militants which made the region terrorized but also a huge number of foreign militants contributed in spreading violence in the tribal society of FATA. For instance eighty people have been killed in FATA only in the third quarter of 2012 in cross border attacks from Afghanistan (FRC, 2012).

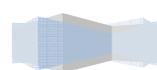
The Taliban somehow enjoyed popular support, though it differs at scales in different parts of FATA. *“The only rational behind our support for Taliban in Wana is their fight against Kafir/infidel (referring to U.S lead NATO forces) in Afghanistan. Taliban keep the border protected from U.S aggression”*, said by Mullana Abdul Aziz, a senior member of Ullama Shura of South Waziristan Agency. The Shura has religious as well as political hegemony in the area which has the capacity to monopolize the society in every aspect. The support of the Shura for militants (Taliban) may be considered more or less the support of the people as a whole.

The above mentioned brief description of the security situations in FATA indicates that Afghan crisis always contributed in triggering conflict in FATA. A host many analysts draw the root causes of conflict in FATA from the current Afghan crisis while most of the schools also connect it from the 1980s and early 1990s Afghan crisis (Haider, 2012).

The complex correlation of FATA issue with the crisis in Afghanistan gives optimistic view on the grounds that the US has announced end of the crisis in Afghanistan where it will withdraw combat forces from Afghanistan in 2014 (ABC News, 2011). Presumably the end of the crises in Afghanistan should bring peace by eliminating conflict in FATA but to how far it is possible is million dollar question.

On the other hand “Peace Process Roadmap to 2015” given by the Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) envisions the armed groups to be disarmed through dialogue in future (High Peace Council, 2012). The roadmap also proposes that all the parties will respect Afghan constitution and fundamental human right of both men and women, which seems impossible for Taliban to accept it. Taliban will strive for the restoration of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (keeping in consideration the previous Taliban regime) which is contrary to the essence of roadmap for peace in Afghanistan by HPC. The post-withdrawal crisis in Afghanistan will also implicate on the security situation in FATA.

The power vacuum often leads to civil war and other internal crisis in society. In this case, NATO forces withdrawal in 2014 has an improper strategy which may create space for combatant groups to jump into the post war arena in an effort to overcome one another (Lodhi, 2012). It has already been observed in post Afghan-USSR war in early 1990s. Taliban seems one of the strongest players in the tug-of-war for power and domination which would start in Afghanistan after the US lead NATO forces withdrawal. How will the militant group, particularly Taliban, behave and react to the situation both in Afghanistan and in Pakistan? What will be the rationale behind and legitimacy for recruitments by militant groups to carry out their activities, in Pakistan and specifically in FATA? How will people respond to the changed situation in the region? These are, but not limited to, questions call for an immediate enquiry to forecast the post-withdrawal scenario.



Profiles of the guest speakers

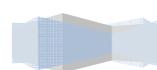
Mr. Hassan Khan:

Mr. Khan is a senior journalist and an esteemed analyst in the Pakistan and Afghanistan affairs. He started his career in 1999 as a journalist with the local English news paper Frontier Post based in Peshawar. He has passed through many stages of his journalistic journey inside the country and in abroad as well. Mr. Hassan Khan has a vast experience of working with Public and Private T.V channels in Pakistan such as Pakistan Television (P.T.V), Khyber T.V etc. His program, named as **Jarga** remained very famous among people, which was telecasted from P.T.V in 2004. Hassan Khan's articles and commentaries, focusing on the affairs of Asia in general and of Pak-Afghan in particular, have been published in various news papers in Pakistan and abroad. His special interest in Pak-Afghan issues and his understanding of the land and people of both sides of the Pakistan and Afghanistan border makes him prominent on the subject matter. He has frequently travelled across the Pak-Afghan border.

Mr. Asmatullah Khan Wazir:

Mr. Wazir is an experienced researcher and development professional who has worked on different projects in various capacities. He has led Mine Risk Education project in Kohat, Hangu, DI Khan and Tank. Similarly, he headed projects for Swiss Development Corporation (SDC), Handicap International Belgium (HI Belgium) and Small Arms Survey Geneva. He has also lead a research study "Mine Action in Pakistan: Analyzing Humanitarian Impact and Creating a Tool for Action" in partnership with Geneva call.

Besides that he is Program Coordinator for the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) project SPADO running across Pakistan. He has written articles and appeared as a guest speaker on various forums. Currently, he is working as Director Research and Development with Research Advocacy and Development Organization (RAD).



Key notes from guest lecturers' speech:

By Hassan Khan: Overview of the post withdrawal situations in Afghanistan

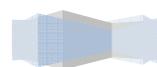
- As Afghan nation is the most misunderstood nation, in the same way the issue of Afghanistan is also the most misunderstood issue. The countries involved (Pakistan, US, UK etc) in the conflict in Afghanistan, ignored the expectation of the people of Afghanistan.
- One of the major problems with the Afghan issue is that every involving party is not ready to take responsibility of the whole issue; instead they blame one another.
- Afghans think that the conflict does not belong to them rather it was imposed on them. On the other hand other, the rest of stakeholders blame the people of Afghanistan for the whole thing. They say that it is Afghan issue. The West calls Pakistan the sole responsible for the failure of conflict management in Afghanistan. While Pakistan blames Afghans and the international community for the conflict in Afghanistan.
- This blame game hinders the progress of resolving the issue because nobody is ready to own this issue. While this problem of disowning increases the chances of failure.
- The trust deficit among Pakistan, US and Afghanistan, especially at government level, is the also the big problem in the resolution of the Afghan crisis.
- Pakistan has been considered the creator of Taliban; that is why expectation from Pakistan is very high to play an active role in settling the Afghan crisis. At the same time Pakistan has never been trusted by the Westerns and the Afghans.
- Another thing which becomes the cause of prolonging Afghan crisis was the President Karzai's feelings of insecurity. He thought that everyone was against him therefore he politicized the *Afghan High Peace Council* which was a hope of getting rid of the crisis. Due to injecting political elements in the high peace council it has lost its effectiveness. President Karzai projected/presented the High Peace Council as a Government body instead of Afghan (public) body.
- The problems with High Peace Council affected the peace process between Pakistan and Afghanistan and Afghan crisis.
- There are many other factors which perpetuate the Afghan crisis, such as ethnic differences, corruption and warlordism¹ etc. The people of Afghanistan blame Pakistan for the current prevailing crisis in Afghanistan but similarly they also accept their own internal problems that contributed to prolonging the crisis.
- There is a common perception and fear that the post withdrawal setup will deepen the ethnic differences² in Afghanistan. They do not afraid that Taliban will takeover.
- The people of Afghanistan see the 2014 the year of transformation where new thing and actors will come up.

Asmatullah Khan Wazir: Post withdrawal scenario inside Pakistan; Pak and Afghan Relations

- There is a long history in which we see the impacts of Afghan crisis related to the Pakistan and other neighbors that compelled Pakistan to get involved in the crisis.
- There may be some reasons of Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan conflict such as Pakistan's strategic interests in the region, Pakistan, especially Pashtun belt, cultural linkages with the people of Afghanistan.
- The involvement of Pakistan was not the very choice of the State of Pakistan rather the international (specifically US) pressure dragged Pakistan into this conflict.
- Pakistan supported Taliban during cold war due to the US pressure and somehow her own strategic interests in the region.
- The post withdrawal situation in Afghan will have definite impacts on Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as the Taliban are likely to takeover in the post withdrawal setup in Afghanistan.

¹ The phenomenon of War Lordism is comparatively less in Pashtun dominant areas of Afghanistan while this phenomenon is very common in none Pashtun areas, the speaker claimed.

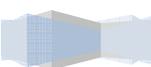
² Pakistan and Iran also contributed in these ethnic differences in Afghanistan, where Pakistan President Musharraf policy of supporting *Pashtuns* attracted Iran to support *Hazara*, the speaker analyzed.



- The reason behind this perception of Pakistan is the presence of the Taliban's strong existence and ethnic differences within Afghan forces. The internal ethnic differences are negatively affecting the capability of Afghan forces.
- Pakistan has released the Taliban prisoners³ to improve good relations with Taliban. Pakistan has calculated the post withdrawal scenario in Afghanistan where Taliban will take over. Taliban are the old friends of Pakistan so this collaboration may continue in future as well.
- Pakistan has two major security threats; one from the TTP and the other from the separatist armed movement in Balochistan.
- The US withdrawal will minimize the threat of the insurgents operating in and from Balochistan because it is considered that they have been trained in Afghanistan⁴.
- The Taliban threat in KPK and FATA is comparatively complex where they have not a single decisive leadership among them. Single leadership may be helpful in negotiating with them.
- There are two prospects in integrating these Taliban groups in KPK and FATA;
 - Taliban are justifying themselves on the basis that they are fighting with infidels in Afghanistan while these infidels have been supported by the State of Pakistan therefore they are operating in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. After 2014 when US lead NATO will leave the region and Taliban will lose the justification for their new recruitment.
 - The religious parties in Pakistan can play a positive role in integrating Taliban in Pakistan.
- The people of KPK and FATA are now fed up of these atrocities in bomb blasts, suicide attacks and target killing by Taliban. And this frustration is increasing day-by-day due the increasing trends in corruption. Therefore, Political forces will be highly appreciated in post withdrawal scenario in FATA.
- Keeping in view the new trends and transitions the post withdrawal era will be a new era of transformation in KPK and FATA.

³ All the imprisoned Taliban were soft Taliban who were less inclined towards war. Therefore Afghan government wanted these Taliban to be released to forward the dialogue process. On the other hand Pakistan also wanted to contribute in the peace process in Afghanistan by releasing these soft Taliban.

⁴ These insurgents will be left very small room for operational activities from across the border in Pakistan.



Way forward

The policy solution for Afghan crises should focus on the needs of the people of Afghanistan keeping it as a top priority. For prioritizing means and methods to foster peace in Afghanistan, public opinion reflecting the masses' demand must be considered as a valid input. At the same time, the stakeholders⁵ should accept their past policy failure in resolving the Afghan issue as each of them had been pursuing their own motives. The neighbors of Afghanistan tried to influence the state building process to serve their own interests which caused disturbance all over the region. To get a friendly Afghan government Pakistan committed mistake of supporting certain ethnic population while ignoring the will of a considerable proportion of Afghan population. This approach of Pakistan hurdle the peace process in Afghanistan on one hand while caused the conflict in the North Western border (FATA and KPK) of Pakistan on the other.

According to the above analysis changes on one side of the Pak-Afghan border reflects on the other side of the border. The US lead NATO forces' expected withdrawal in 2014 would implicate on Pakistan, specifically on FATA. Therefore, Pakistan should read itself to cope with the future scenario. The militant groups would lose the popular support in FATA and KPK, after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. So Pakistan should strike in the right time either to integrate or disband the militants groups in FATA and KPK, contrary to previous policy. Peace and cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan is really desirable for establishing the regional peace. It can be achieved through bringing change in the traditional policy tools by both the countries. For this purpose the economic activities would be helpful to change the course of action from war to cooperation.

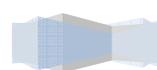
Following are key points derived from discussion:

- All major stakeholders should own the responsibility of policy failure in Afghan issue. Realization of it would be helpful in formulating changed policy required for resolving the issue.
- The concerns of and demands of Afghan people must be kept in focus while framing the policy in this regard.
- The neighbors of Afghanistan should honestly work for the integration of the ethnically divided society in Afghan. Because the previous policies of supporting certain ethnic groups in Afghanistan which caused the ethnic differences internally. These ethnic differences have often hurdled the peace process.
- Pakistan has often tried to install a Pakistan friendly government in Afghanistan which brought complexity in the issue of Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan should be supported in building their State which would be governed by a stable government. To achieve this goal Pakistan would be left with only one option i.e. honestly approaching none-Pashtuns population of Afghanistan which would be helpful in both, social integration in Afghanistan and also installing a stable government. And these two issues are leading issues in Afghan crisis.
- Pakistan and Afghanistan should jointly and seriously strategize the future scenario in the region as Pakistan has its strategic interests linked with Afghanistan.
- Economic activities between or among countries change the course of action in the relations in which the involving countries often reject hardcore policies towards one another⁶. Many of the analysts believe that Pakistan can pursue its interests in Afghanistan, not through coercive means but by capitalizing on huge trade opportunities for Pakistan in Afghanistan. Afghanistan could be a very reasonable market for Pakistani products.
- The US lead forces in Afghanistan should not leave the crisis laden countries abruptly because its sudden withdrawal would create a power vacuum which would be filled by the conflicting non state actors⁷ in Afghanistan. The US should help in rebuilding the state of Afghanistan, considering it a primary responsibility.
- The regional actors should adopt regional approach towards peace where they should stand together to block the external forces interfering in the affairs of the region.

⁵ External stakeholders include neighbouring states and international community while the Internal stakeholders include, the government, different ethnic (Uzbek, Tajak, Hazzara, Pashtun etc.) and insurgent groups.

⁶ According Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye the decline of military force as a policy tool and the increase in economic and other forms of interdependence should increase the probability of cooperation among states.

⁷ Non state actors include Taliban, Northern Alliance and other war lords in Afghanistan.



Appendices

Agenda

FRC Guest Lecture Series

Topic: Post withdrawal scenario in Afghanistan impact on FATA

Date: 28 December, 2012

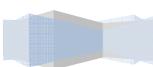
Timings: 14:00 -to- 16:20

Venue: Conference Room, Head Office, FATA Research Centre, House# 23-A, Street# 28, F-10/1, Islamabad

Guest Speakers:

1. Hassan Khan, Senior Journalist and a specialist of the Pakistan and Afghanistan affairs
2. Asmatullah Khan Wazir, Islamabad based Researcher

Time	Activities	Owner
14:00 -14:30	Arrival of Guest and Registration	Ms. Zakia Rubab Mohsin
14:35 - 14:45	Welcome, introduction of the FRC activities	Mr. Muhammad Zaheer Khan
15:50 -15:05	Introduction of the guest speakers, overview of the issue	Dr. Ashraf Ali
15:10 -15:30	Overview of the post withdrawal situations in Afghanistan	Mr. Hassan khan
15:35 -15:40	Post withdrawal scenario inside Pakistan; in the light of future relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan	Mr. Asmatullah Khan Wazir
15: 45 - 16:05	Discussion, Question and Answer	All participants
16:10 - 16:20	Conclusion, Thanks and Adjournment	Dr. Ashraf Ali
16:20	Hi-Tea	All participants



Press release

Afghanistan Post 2014: Trust deficit among stakeholders visible

By: Nawaf Khan

Islamabad, Dec 31: FRC held a guest lecture session on the issue of post 2014 scenario in Afghanistan and its implications on FATA here on Friday at FRC seminar hall Islamabad.

The guest lecturers include Mr Hassan Khan, a renowned journalist who has worked for Dawn News, Frontier Post, Central Asia Online and Al-Jazeera, and Mr Asmatullah Khan Wazir, a senior research fellow at Sustainable Peace and Development Organization (SPADO).

“Although multiple factors are responsible for Afghanistan’s instability, the issue has not been owned by any actor involved in.”, Mr. Hassan Khan expressed during his lecture.

“There is a general mistrust prevailing among the main stakeholders in Afghanistan and I consider it the main obstacle in the progress of conflict resolution”, Mr. Khan added.

Mr. Khan said that the issue of Afghanistan is being misinterpreted as no one is ready to take the responsibility. For instance, afghan nationals blame Pakistan, Pakistan holds Afghan Government responsible for bad governance.

The US government neither trust Afghan government nor the Pakistani leadership. Afghan people themselves do not trust their government besides America and Pakistan.

All the main stakeholders including Iran, Pakistan, USA, Russia, India, Saudi Arabia and the Afghan Government withhold different policies for resolution of on-going conflict in Afghanistan.

“The Taliban are not strong enough now to lead Afghanistan. They are not in position to come into the corridors of powers neither by bullet nor through the ballot” Khan added further.

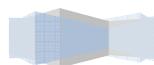
He opined that the people of Afghanistan are not ready to accept the Taliban regime in any shape in the future. “The Afghan Military has got the requisite ability to tackle the Taliban” he said.

While on other hand Mr Asmatullah Khan Wazir opined differently on issue of Taliban’s. “Provinces of Parwan and Baglan are the recent falls to Taliban and it seems on the ground that Taliban have now more support base in Tajak and Uzbek populated areas of Afghanistan”, he said.

He argued that Provinces under Taliban control were more peaceful then the other. Afghan Public and even the Afghan Government has reached at a conclusion that peace can only prevail if Western troops withdraws from Afghanistan and Taliban are given their due share in running the affairs of the State.

According to Mr Wazir no one wants an abrupt departure of the US from the region as this would exponentially increase the complexities of Afghan crisis. However, a clear cut road map in regard to peaceful resolution of Afghan crisis is the need of hour.

Similarly he was of the opinion that “The United States of America has also realized that it can’t settle the Afghan crisis on its own”.



Pictorial Insight



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