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***AFGHANISTAN POST 2014 IN THE LIGHT OF ITS RECENT PAST***

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*He spent a number of years in the remote areas of the Pakistani Tribal areas as well as Balochistan. He served alongside Mahsuds, Wazirs, Afridis, Khattaks and members of all other Pashtun tribes. And, as a Punjabi, brigadier-general Shaukat Qadir has a unique insight into the tribal mind, customs and traditions.*

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**Brief historical review-Afghanistan**

By 2001, the Afghan was fed up with the repressive Taliban rule. So also were Pakistani Pashtuns, helplessly watching their Afghan brethren suffering. I can personally testify that the Afghan and their Pashtun sympathizers in Pakistan were prepared to welcome the American invaders in 2001. Had the invading troops but known this, and had they started off with the assumption that most Afghans (Pashtun and non-Pashtun) would be their supporters; the course of the past eleven years could have been different.

The invading troops, in fact, did the exact opposite, and assumed all Afghan Pashtun to be the enemy. Tragically, a priceless opportunity was squandered.

What went wrong and why has been and, is constantly being analyzed by a variety of analysts, so I will not waste the time of this learned audience by dwelling on the history of the past three decades or even the last eleven years. For those interested in my views I am listing a few links below. I consider the *History of the Haqqanis* a compulsory read, since that is relevant to the present and future. I recommend *Why the US military should pull out of Afghanistan ASAP?* since it begins with a purely military analysis. The others are optional<sup>1</sup>

## The significance of the Haqqanis

On the assumption that the reader has been through the *History of the Haqqanis*, I will attempt to build on what has been stated there. The Haqqanis belong to the Zadran tribe (western media often calls it the Jadran tribe, so consider them interchangeable). Numerically, this is the largest Pashtun tribe in Afghanistan, though the Durrani tribe (the tribe to which Mulla Omer and Hamid Karzai belong) has control over greater space in Southern Afghanistan. The Zadrans are the vast majority in the Afghan provinces of Paktika, Paktia, Nangarhar, Logar, Ghazni etc. and are a large minority in the eight other neighboring provinces.



<sup>1</sup> - A *History of the Haqqanis*: <http://www.counterpunch.org/2011/09/29/the-history-of-the-haqqanis/>. There is a typo in the article. In 2002, when Jalaluddin Haqqani was approached to join the Afghan government, it was under Hamid Karzai, not under Burhanuddin Rabbani, as stated in the article.

- *Why the US military should pull out of Afghanistan* <http://www.defence.pk/forums/strategic-geopolitical-issues/103395-why-us-military-should-pull-out-afghanistan-asap.html>.

- "Understanding the insurgency in FATA" (Pakistan) can be found among "Selected Articles" on my website: [www.shaukatqadir.info](http://www.shaukatqadir.info)

- "Why the US is doomed in Afghanistan": <http://www.counterpunch.org/2011/04/06/why-the-us-is-doomed-in-afghanistan/>

- "Two or three things you should know about Afghanistan" can be found here: <http://theglobalrealm.com/2011/04/07/two-or-three-things-you-need-to-know-about-afghanistan/>.

A cursory view of the map will show that these lie, not only adjacent to (or in the close vicinity of) Pakistan's tribal belt, but also virtually surround Kabul. What is more, the Zadran tribe is considered the parent tribe of the Pakistani Pashtun tribe of Wazirs, who are the majority in North Waziristan.

If in the 1980s, Jaluddin Haqqani was exclusively a CIA asset, as recorded even in Wikipedia, he was certainly not under ISI influence at that stage. In this period, the CIA was, in fact, following the ISI's lead. The only Afghan leader, even according to Wikipedia, whom the CIA was not sharing with the ISI, was Jalal. In the 1990s, Jalal was fighting against the Pakistan/ISI/CIA-backed Afghan government of Gulbaddin Hikmatyar and subsequently, against the Pakistan/ISI/CIA backed Taliban. If, therefore, he became associated with the ISI, it could only be post 1996. By that time Jalal was a war veteran with about 17 years of experience behind him, starting late 1979.

He certainly needed no education in guerrilla warfare from the ISI. In fact, he could have given them lessons, along with lessons to veterans of the CIA.

Although ISI, with CIA approval and support, has been training and, on occasions, planning and directing operations by freedom fighters in Afghanistan: the Taliban Jalalabad fiasco being a case in point, it has never had this role in support of the Haqqanis; and, what is more, they wouldn't dare try.

Thus when even people as revered as Admiral Mike Mullen refer to the Haqqani Network as a "veritable arm" of the ISI and accuse the ISI of having ordered and controlled the Haqqani Network's operations against US forces in Afghanistan, with specific reference to the attack on the US Embassy/UN Compound, they are either fooling themselves or us. Or, which is the most likely, *preparing grounds for identifying the made-to-order scapegoat responsible for the US failure in Afghanistan* whenever that might occur.

I have stated in my history of the Haqqanis that, by demonizing the Haqqani Network, the US has only helped swell their ranks. Now that this network has been declared a "terrorist" network by the US, if you were an Afghan who has begun to hate the US, irrespective of your tribal or ethnic affiliation, which network would you choose to join?

Indeed the US has played right into the hands of the Haqqanis. The Haqqanis are continuing to grow in numbers and they will be the force to reckon with, from here onwards: but more on this in the next segment.

As an aside, the US has admitted to the compulsion of paying a "tax" to Taliban for transporting their goods via Pakistan. Goods being transported to Kandahar are taxed by Mulla Omer. But, goods transported via Peshawar to Kabul can only be taxed by the Haqqanis. So the US is now paying "Terrorists" to arm themselves, so that US goods can reach them, so that they can fight terrorists!

## Recent Developments

Despite CIA claims to the contrary, Afghan Taliban had realized their folly in subordinating themselves to Al-Qaeda by 2002. They started breaking free of Al-Qaeda by around mid-2005 and, in 2007, when Al-Qaeda took the Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-Taliban Pakistan, TTP) under its wings to announce that henceforth their "*Enemy # 1 was Pakistan and not the US*", Mulla Omer's spokesman at the time, Muhammed Mansha, was quick to distance himself from Al-Qaeda, condemning suicide attacks against

innocent Pakistanis, declaring that neither Pakistan nor its security forces were their enemy nor would Afghan Taliban support those who were enemies of Pakistan.

Thereafter, Afghan Taliban no longer has “official” ties to Al-Qaeda. Nor have they “officially” renounced Al-Qaeda. They intend using this as a bargaining chip during future negotiations with the US.

Afghan Taliban has been very clear about three things whenever it came to “negotiations on the future of Afghanistan”: a) they will not accept the US imposed constitution and b) they will not negotiate under preconditions which include a) above and/or surrendering their weapons before negotiations and c) they will not negotiate with Karzai’s government.

Their agreement to negotiating with Burhanuddin Rabbani in 2010/11, despite his being a representative of Karzai’s government has to be viewed in context. Although Rabbani was a Tajik who had lots of Afghan Pashtun blood on his hands, he enjoyed a very special (almost extraordinary) status among the Afghan, across the ethnic divide. He was referred to as *Ustaad* by all Afghans, including the Talib; a word that translates to teacher but is actually closer to mentor. To understand how he reestablished himself to this position in 2010, you might read my article “Why Joe Biden rush to visit Pakistan<sup>1</sup>”.

Another aspect needs to be emphasized in this context. Even as they are divided, viciously cruel when they fight other ethnic groups, the Afghan, across the ethnic divide is, first and foremost, an Afghan. After the Soviet Union collapsed, the Afghan Uzbeks are adjacent to Uzbekistan, the Tajiks to Tajikistan, Turkmens to Turkmenistan, but has anyone ever heard of a pro-Uzbekistan movement among Afghan Uzbeks or among Afghan Tajiks or Turkmen? They are all proud of their Afghan identity. This is the single greatest flaw in the thinking process of those who advocate a Balkanization of Afghanistan. Incidentally, the Russians attempted to encourage such movements but never succeeded.

Gulbaddin Hikmatyar, leader of the Hizb-e-Islami, however has been reduced to the status of a pawn. The Americans “permit” him to retain control of the Province of Kunar in Afghanistan, adjacent to the Tribal Agency Bajaur in Pakistan. Here Hikmatyar provides succor to members of the TTP who regularly carry out raids from there into Pakistani territory.

Although Hikmatyar’s following is estimated at less than 1,500 personnel, he might well be used by the Saudi-US negotiators to purchase him some role in the post 2014 political dispensation. Such an effort is highly unlikely to succeed.

A team led by Anatol Lieven, the British analyst, has recently met with senior representatives of Mulla Omer’s Taliban. I respect Anatol for his thoroughness of research but find nothing unexpected in the report submitted by his team. It is extensive and exhaustive covering a wide range of subjects. Most of his conclusions tend to confirm mine; except for the acceptance of a prolonged US presence within specified bases in Afghanistan beyond 2014, with certain provisos; which I will address later. According to Anatol:

a) The Taliban representatives they interviewed have, in effect reiterated the three preconditions they had laid down for negotiations, which I stated earlier.

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<sup>1</sup> It can be viewed here: <http://www.counterpunch.org/2011/02/11/why-did-joe-biden-rush-to-visit-pakistan/>.



b) However, they are prepared for a ceasefire to facilitate talks and are even prepared to discuss the prospect of a US military stabilisation force operating in Afghanistan up to 2024 out of the five primary military bases – Kandahar, Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Kabul – as long as US presence contributed to Afghan security and did not constrain Afghan independence and *Islamic jurisprudence* (italics added). The paper also states that the Talibs they met warned them that any American attacks against neighbours – such as Iran and Pakistan – launched from Afghan bases would not be tolerated since it would impact on national security and invite 'trouble'

c) The paper gives the impression that other splinter factions of Taliban will fall in line with Mulla Omer's ruling. While this may be true for some but the current splintering of the Talibs is unlikely to return to a monolithic structure within the foreseeable future.

The points b) above need to be understood in some detail. Firstly, their emphasis on Islamic jurisprudence: while various individuals interviewed for the report imply a varying degree of flexibility on discussing the constitution; in my view, not only does this reemphasize the total rejection of the current Afghan constitution but also that the fresh constitution will be based on their interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence (*Sharia*). The latter may not itself be of immediate concern to the international community since it is my conviction that Mulla Omer's group is unlikely to return to the strict form of *Wahabiism* or *Salaafism*, the two factions that favor a stringent version of Islam. It is far more likely that Omer's Talib will favor the equitable, democratic but Islamic judicial system, in accordance with tribal customs. It was this system that won them their initial popularity in 1994-5, and the support, enabling them to win victories without fighting battles. Anatol's report also tends to support this conclusion.

The problem with this archaic system is that, in the long run, it can always be twisted back to its more evil form(s). On the other hand, it could, in time, become increasingly "democratic".

But the real development of interest is the willingness to negotiate a prolonged US presence in Afghanistan. The condition that these bases will not be permitted to be used to stoke unrest in Pakistan and Iran imply that the Talib is aware that this is a distinct possibility, if it is not already happening it is a very real probability. The precondition is equally obviously intended to reassure both neighbors of the Talib's concerns and desire for harmonious relations.

Nonetheless, why should the Talib suddenly change his position from insisting on a complete withdrawal of US troops to a position where he is willing to have American troops housed in Afghanistan to "help" him ensure stability?

To answer this question we need to go back to the Haqqanis again.

As I stated earlier, the Haqqani Network is now the largest, most influential, and most strategically located of the Afghan Freedom Fighters. Were the US to negotiate with all factions of the Afghan Freedom Fighters, Haqqanis would have a major political role to play, perhaps a much greater one than Mulla Omer's Talibs. It, therefore, perhaps suits Omer if Haqqanis are excluded.

Since it has been declared a terrorist organization, the US will not be negotiating the future of Afghanistan with the Haqqanis. Any future political dispensation in Afghanistan will, therefore, not include the Haqqanis, who will obviously be the "Enemy" in Afghanistan; and no one knows how formidable an enemy he can be better than Mulla Omer.

That offers one possible explanation for Omer's sudden willingness to make a pact with the Devil (the US); as his hope for security against the future threat from the Haqqanis.

But what is going to be the outcome of this?

The Haqqanis will remain a thorn in the side of the post 2014 Afghan dispensation. US forces will be employed to deal with them. When they are, their employment of force is unlikely to be any different from their methods today; which means lots of frequent "collateral damage". As a consequence, an increasing number of Afghans will begin to view the post 2014 political dispensation of Afghanistan as "American proxies" and the cycle of violence will keep growing until it either explodes or the US finally packs up and leaves the region to its chaotic future.

The scapegoat for their "failure" in Afghanistan has already been selected.

This being said, there is always another possibility i.e. that *Mulla Omer will use this offer to the US for an extended stay in Afghanistan, as a bargaining chip with the Haqqanis, so as to bring them back, from their current status of superiority, to the status of being at par with him.* Having done so and, having negotiated with the US, on the one hand and, with the Haqqanis, on the other, the post 2014 Afghan political dispensation could then refuse permission to the US to stay on and force the Americans out; just as the Iraqis did.

In such an eventuality, the internecine political jostling for power could be minimized and a relatively stable Afghanistan might emerge. Needless to say, the US loses in either eventuality.

All this could be solved if the US agreed to negotiate with ALL Afghan factions, including the Haqqanis. But if the Haqqanis were included, the tempting possibility and, as I pointed out, that too could be a mere illusion, of retaining a presence through till 2014, might not even be considered.

If the US did include the Haqqanis among those it is negotiating with, it is possible that post 2014, a more meaningful economic cooperation program with Afghanistan might be worked out; merely a possibility. However, we are all conscious that the option under discussion now, is unrealistic. More on this subject before I conclude.

## **Pakistan's Domestic Scene**

Ours is a country which is, unfortunately, by turn, suffering from the scourge of corrupt and evil military dictators interspersed with even more corrupt and evil elected leaders. Elections are due next year but there is little hope of improvement. Nonetheless, our hope lies in nurturing even this corrupt democracy because there is a growing awareness in the people that, if not in the 2013 elections, the next one might bring new faces that can begin to stem the rot.

Pakistan's judiciary, having fought for and established its independence, is now becoming hyper-active and over-reaching its constitutional role. This too will take time to balance and, hopefully, the pendulum will cease its over-arching.

The military, though still a political power to contend with, seems to have decided to play its role quietly, from behind the curtain, only in matters that impinge on its perception of "national security".

Religious extremism, intolerance, and hate are increasing. Though this is confined to an infinitesimally small number but, due to the visibility of their acts, they are obviously Pakistan's "torch bearers" in the eyes of the world.

Targeted killings, extra-judicial murders, kidnappings, and "missing persons" are increasing almost daily. In Balochistan, while security forces are still involved, most Pashtuns of Balochistan and even many of the Baloch acknowledge the fact that they are settling old scores and ridding themselves of political rivals, rival smugglers etc. while laying these murders also at the doors of security forces.

The involvement of RAW<sup>1</sup> in stoking unrest in Balochistan and that of the CIA is an open secret. Some Baloch youth, in a two-day closed door session with me, admitted to being paid in dollars to kill. According to these young men, CIA's going rate is \$ 100/- per day and India's only \$ 75/-. A few Pakistani Baloch claim to be paying out funds on behalf of the CIA, while some Iranian settlers in Quetta are reputedly conduits for payments by RAW.

The problem of these Baloch youth, many of them with university degrees which are not worth the paper they are printed on, is unemployment. In total frustration, they stated to me, *"I can work on daily wages as a labor for Rs 300/- to 350/- (\$ 3.25 to 3.75) or kill for \$ 100/- a day? Which would you do? Life may be short but I will live it well and maybe, save enough for a brother to get better education and lead the life of a proud Baloch"*.

Worst of all, religious extremism is growing in Punjab; the heart of Pakistan and, for their own different reasons, the Central and Provincial government continue to remain in a state of denial; and the army is reluctant to open another front while still in a state of "over-stretch".

Because of Pakistan's chequered history of using "jihadist" elements to further political ends in the past, Pakistan remains suspect. I have no intention of offering "legitimate reasons" or "semi-legitimate excuses" to justify these actions or explain errors of judgment. I assume that most of you are knowledgeable on this aspect of our history and have reached your conclusions; which I am unlikely to influence. Those who wish to are welcome to seek elaboration. In this paper, I will confine myself to the present and future.

From my conversations with serving senior military officers (I only have a few students left in the army, my students in the navy and air force have reached four stars and retired but many junior officers who served under me are still in service and are senior officers today), as well as from the few public statements by the army chief, my distinct impression is that all ranks in the security forces and intelligence services are conscious of the fact that we are facing an existentialist threat from the enemy within. Furthermore, most acknowledge errors of the past that have resulted in turning this genie upon us and, virtually all, are agreed that this takes top priority.

After a few years of relative silence on the subject, the question regarding increasing religious extremism and radicalization within the armed forces of Pakistan has risen again. Attacks on GHQ, Kamra, Osama bin Laden's presence in Abbotabad for almost six years, the Court Martial of a serving Brigadier have all added fuel to the fire.

Let me state quite clearly that the soldiers are a part of Pakistani society. Consequently, if there is a growth in religious extremism and radicalization, it is impossible to ensure that these evils do not permeate the ranks of security forces from the lowliest to the highest.

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<sup>1</sup> Research and Analysis Wing : India Foreign intelligence Service.

Even as far back as 2003, the twin attempts on Gen Musharaf's life in December were assisted by some low ranking members of the air force and police. However, the security forces of Pakistan are aware of this growing menace. There is a constant effort to screen all ranks and, while there are still some radical elements to be found in each of the security services, their numbers are small and they are constantly under scrutiny.

The security services make special efforts through the system of selective promotion to ensure that any individual considered mildly off center, whether to the right or too far left, does not rise too far. The fact that Brig Ali, the officer court martialed for his links with radical elements was passed over for further promotion, before being caught and tried, testifies to this fact.

Personally, this matter still remains a matter of concern to me, despite my certainty that the security forces and intelligence agencies are working overtime to guard against this.

I cannot help adding the comment that, at least, unlike the American Military, which actually ran a course on why Muslims are the evil enemy (Islamophobia) and how they should be dealt with; the Pakistan security forces might have elements that consider the US as an enemy, but does not formally teach, or any other such inflammatory course to potential officers. *The ultra-right wingers in the American military who are Islam haters are likely to exceed by far the ultra right wingers hidden in our security forces.*

Those of you who have been following the news in Pakistan will certainly have taken note of the army chief's encouragement to the Pakistan government in seeking to improve relations with India. Again, in the wake of the snowslide in Siachin which caused 132 deaths, he expressed a desire for a pull back from Siachin: this, from Gen Kiyani, who has frequently been accused of being "India-centric".

As a matter of fact, on Siachin, it has always been the Indian military which has sabotaged a solution on two occasions past, and remains unwilling to find a viable solution to this totally unnecessary face-off at an altitude where more casualties are caused by weather and terrain than by the enemy, to date. I suppose it is their attempt to "payback" for Pakistan's past policy of keeping a sizeable portion of the Indian security forces tied down in Indian Kashmir.

I am quite certain that the Pakistan military of today is keen to improve relations with India. It is, however, India's turn to play hardball.

It is my considered view that the erstwhile dream of "reunification and Maha-Bharat (Greater India)" is as dead in India as our foolish dream of Afghanistan providing strategic depth to Pakistan. I am also very aware that an increasing number of Indian analysts would like to see an economically viable, internally stable Pakistan which poses India no threat.

I first made this point at a number of forums during my discussions in India in 2000, that India, despite its vibrant economy, is going nowhere without energy. And that for the import of sufficient cheap energy overland (which remains the cheapest means of energy transportation), India is dependent on Pakistan, whichever the original source of energy: Central Asia, Iran or the Middle East.

Numerous Indian analysts have reluctantly begun to acknowledge the truth of this geographic imperative.

There is, however, a segment among Indian security analysts who are still apprehensive of Pakistan's potential as a "future enemy" if it grows economically, particularly if it develops and grows economically, in close cooperation with China.



It is my view that these individuals are responsible for the current unfriendly Indian policies towards Pakistan. Pakistan has been equally guilty of unfriendly policies towards India, perhaps more. But despite Mumbai attacks and other past incursions, Pakistan's oft-repeated offers of a "No War Pact", a Joint Security System, a Joint Anti-Terrorist program etc. could have met with some success.

In my view, RAW's interference in stoking unrest in the strategically located and mineral rich province of Balochistan is due to this apprehension: what will be Pakistan's "India Policy" if it could fully exploit the strategic location of Balochistan to revive all the old "Silk Routes" between Central Asia, China, Middle East and further, coupled with the riches of Balochistan; since this is increasingly viewed as a joint Sino-Pakistan venture.

This also is the CIA's reason for the same policy. Though, in the case of the US, their concerns are China/Iran-centric, to the CIA Pakistan's fate is "collateral damage".

### **The Pakistani Afghan Policy**

Pakistan's Afghan policy has undergone so many changes that, some years ago, many of us began to think there was no such thing as an Afghan Policy in Pakistan. Since we are looking at the past only as it is relevant to the present and the future, suffice it to say that a defined policy began to emerge post-Musharaf. Although towards the latter half of his tenure, the one thing that had begun to appear to be confirmed was the fact that the stupid dream of "Strategic Depth" in Afghanistan was dead and buried.

Before proceeding further I must again clarify that I am not a government spokesman, merely a student of the subject and am stating my personal views.

The one aspect that I think is quite clearly understood in Pakistan, by the elected government and the security forces is that the future of Afghanistan must be decided upon by the Afghans and not by any outsiders, including Pakistan. We can and must facilitate and perhaps, if our advice is sought by an individual (or group), advise, but no more than that.

The second fact that has been registered in Pakistan very clearly is that the Afghan people are not prepared for a return to the rule of the Talib that they suffered under till 2001. Mulla Omer's faction of the Taliban is also conscious of this fact. It is for this reason that some Talibs subscribing to the more stringent version of Islam have broken away from him. The murder of Burhanuddin Rabbani is probably the work of one of these splinter groups. Or, at least, that is what I concluded from the evasive statement issued by Mulla Omer's spokesman.

As a corollary to the above, what must emerge in the form of an acceptable government for the Afghans in the post 2014 scenario will probably have to be a loose confederation, with the Central Government looking after the minimum necessary and allowing maximum autonomy to provinces. Once again, Anatol Lieven and his team, tend to confirm my view.

With this background understanding, what shape is Pakistan's Afghan policy taking? The one thing that Pakistan cannot afford is an enemy on its western borders as well as its eastern one. To this end, while seeking to improve relations with India, this is the likely basis of Pakistan's (still) emerging Afghan policy. Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan is likely to remain fluid and "emerging" not only because it is dependent on the way the numerous other actors formulate policies, but also because there are far too many unpredictable intangibles.

Within the above, it is in Pakistan's interest to see the emergence of a stable, economically viable, and secure Afghanistan which does not export or import instability. Both of which would, of necessity rebound on Pakistan.

Since Pakistan recognizes its limited ability to influence the future of Afghanistan it will, as a minimum, like to have a non-hostile Afghan government and, as a maximum, a friendly one. It is more than likely that, despite its limited influence the future Afghan government will not be unfriendly towards Pakistan. The Afghans, across the politico-ethnic and tribal divides are also very conscious of being land-locked; and thus, dependent on either Pakistan or Iran. They are reaching out to both but it is more than likely that Pakistan will remain a preferred option.

The organizers asked me to address certain specific questions. I think most of them have been addressed. However, I wish to list two specific questions below and address them in detail, before attempting to provide a geopolitical overview that I have also been asked to provide.

Question: What are the strategic imperatives of Pakistan's security elite as they relate to Afghanistan? Do they consider it desirable to have a weak and not too stable government in Afghanistan, since a strong, stable and (Pakistan) independent government might be considered a threat? What about the (unrecognized) Durand Line and the possibility of a "Greater Afghanistan" or a "Pashtoonistan"?

Some aspects of these questions have been addressed earlier, but let me come to specifics. I will begin with the last question since it impacts directly on the imperatives of our policy.

It is my view that the issue of the Durand Line is also a dead issue. Like in the case of Kashmir, the "disputed" Line of Control is now, more or less, the de facto international boundary, so too is the Durand Line. There is one important difference though. It is unlikely that, in the foreseeable future, the Durand Line will be of any significance to the Pashtun tribes that straddle it. They will continue to cross over to either side, at will, intermingle and intermarry without requiring passports and/or visas.

The issue of the Durand Line will, however, remain alive in Balochistan with the disgruntled Baloch. However, Afghanistan is least interested in increasing its Baloch population and, on the other hand, the large numbers of Afghan Pashtun and Pashtuns from Pakistan's tribal belt who have moved into Balochistan, has changed the demographic makeup of this province. None of the Pashtuns in Balochistan, even those of Afghan origin are interested in an independent Balochistan or in a union with Afghanistan.

The Greater Afghanistan and Pashtoonistan issues are also connected to that of the Durand Line. However, these were dreams of the two brothers; Dr Khan Sahib and Khan Abdul Wali Khan, at the time of the partition of India; a point in time when these two brothers were considered the most influential of the Pashtun politicians. And yet, despite their determined opposition, the Pashtun of the region then known as North West Frontier Province, today's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, voted overwhelmingly in favor of a union with Pakistan.

If they couldn't make it happen, there is no one on the Pakistani Pashtun political horizon who wants to bring this issue back to life. Whatever the Pashtun claims of Afghan ancestry, who wants to join Afghanistan in its current state? In fact, Afghans still continue to cross over to Pakistan in search of a better life in Pakistan.

I am fairly certain that the Pakistan military and the government are agreed that they want a strong, stable, economically viable Afghanistan----one not unfriendly towards Pakistan; but that has already been discussed. A relatively weak and semi-stable Afghanistan cannot but impact adversely on Pakistan. Furthermore, the Durand Line being as porous as it is, if Afghanistan remains weak and relatively unstable, illegal immigrants will continue to add to our misery if Afghanistan fails to offer them a better life.

While I have repeatedly emphasized the need for a “strong and stable” Afghanistan, I think it is necessary here to repeat one of my earlier conclusions for emphasis, lest there be some misunderstanding. There have been brief periods in Afghanistan’s history, except for the period of Ahmed Shah Durrani, when Afghanistan has had a strong Central Government.

For most of its life, Afghanistan has been nominally ruled from Kabul through the strong ancestral tribal system. I stated earlier that, in my view, a similar system is likely to emerge post 2014. When I emphasize a strong, stable, and economically viable Afghanistan, I do not imply a strong center but a country that draws strength and stability from its economic viability.

I am conscious of the fact that there are some Pakistanis who express concern over the possibility of Indian influence in a strong, stable Afghanistan. Not only are these few in number, they are not students of Afghan history. Afghan Pashtuns have a peculiar hang-up with Hindus. Afghans have hosted almost all religions with considerable tolerance until a few decades ago.

Among the religions they have hosted are many offshoots of Hinduism: Budhists, the Jain, Sikhs etc. in addition to Parsis and even Jews, have all been welcomed but the Afghan Pashtun has always been wary of Hindus, for some inexplicable reason (although there is one octogenarian Hindu in Kabul who has refused to leave the country and still enjoys the protection of all ethnicities in Kabul). This does not mean that India will not have a role to play in the economic development of Afghanistan; they will be welcomed. But, it is highly unlikely that the Afghan Pashtun dominated areas will fall under Indian influence. Indian influence in the non-Pashtun areas in the north is likely to remain strong, but I do not foresee Afghanistan, even if it is strong and stable, posing a threat to Pakistan on behalf of India.

Question: Could Pakistan adopt the strategy of “exporting” some of its religious “energy” to Indian Kashmir and Afghanistan (on the lines adopted by Saudi Arabia), in the hope of improving its internal security situation?

Since Kashmir has been coupled with Afghanistan, it is important to understand the difference between the two today.

I commanded a brigade in Pakistani Kashmir in the early ‘90s. I witnessed the corruption of a pure Kashmiri movement for independence (across the religious divide; though led by Muslims, it was supported by Kashmiri Hindus and Sikhs) into a Jihad---the worst damage we did to the Kashmiri cause.

Then, post-Kargil, the Kashmiris finally realized that Pakistan could not help them win their liberty.

What we are now witnessing in Indian Kashmir is a “Kashmiri Intefada”. These are the Kashmiri youth who hid under their beds and watched their mothers and sisters raped and their fathers, brothers, relatives, murdered. Murdered and raped, mostly by Indian security forces but also by so-called “Freedom Fighters”, Muslim scum, sent by Pakistan. These fellows hate us a little less than they hate Indians.

They might even refuse to accept a drink of water from me.

Pakistan is still relevant for some of the older Kashmiri but it is this youth that matters today and can muster the street power. Pakistan can offer them nothing, least of all religious “energy”.

Yes, in Afghanistan we could. However, the current military hierarchy and the emerging senior-officers-to-be have witnessed and studied the fallout of our earlier experiment with exporting religious energy. They are fully aware that all our domestic ills stem from that policy. I am quite certain that this generation will not repeat this mistake. The one after this current generation, I cannot answer for. History’s mistakes are made to be repeated at regular intervals.

Having answered these questions, I wish to address an unasked question: why does the Pakistan military hesitate to undertake operations against the Haqqani Network and/or in North Waziristan (NWA)?

At the present moment, Pakistan has about 250,000 troops deployed or actively engaged in operations in the tribal belt. The rest are deployed to defend the eastern border, deployed along the Line of Control in Kashmir, or in reserve.

The troops in our tribal belt are engaged in active operations in five tribal agencies: Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Aurakzai, and Kurram. They are deployed to defend Upper and Lower Dir, Swat, Malakand and South Waziristan; in all of which they frequently come under attack.

Unless it becomes absolutely necessary, opening another front by launching operations against the Wazir tribe in NWA would be an act of military stupidity. But that isn’t all.

In September 2009, when the Pakistan army launched its operation against the Mahsud tribe in SWA, the army had its largest logistical base for the operation in Miran Shah in NWA. In other words, the army left itself vulnerable to an attack from the rear by the Wazirs and/or the Haqqanis, with no fear of consequences.

Meanwhile our American *allies*, who should have been expected to play the anvil to the hammer of Pakistan military’s operation, decided to vacate six posts that they used to man on the Durand Line opposite SWA; permitting Hakimullah Mahsud and about 6,000 of his supporters to escape.

These Mahsud are back now in Aurakzai and Kurram Agencies for the Pakistan army to fight with again. There is more.

Early last year, the Pakistan army managed to broker a peace deal between warring tribes in the Kurram Agency, so as to secure that flank before launching a more effective operation against Aurakzai and Khyber Agencies. Hakeemullah Mahsud promptly sent his followers to kidnap thirty Shias from Kurram and destroy the peace. In retaliation, Sirajuddin Haqqani, Jalal’s son, sent his followers to protect the Kurram Agency.

Now why, would the Pakistan army alienate a “friend” for the kind of “ally” that we have in US?

However, there is a problem that we are now faced with in NWA. The north eastern portion of NWA is under the control of Maulvi Nazir Muhammed who holds it well in check and poses no threat to Pakistan. The south western portion of NWA is under Hafiz Gul Bahadar, who also posed no threat to Pakistan. However, Gul is either losing control or, for some reason that I have been unable to discover, is now permitting Punjabi Talibs a safe haven in his territory; from where they are attacking us.

This has squeezed the space available to the Pakistan army. If, therefore, the army undertakes a military operation in NWA, in my view, it will be directed at the Punjabi Taliban and those who grant them safe haven. There is, however, another dimension to the problem. Given the current mood in the country, the Pakistan army cannot be seen as undertaking a military operation in NWA at the behest of the Americans.

The problem is, that for *American* domestic compulsions, the American establishment needs to let their people know that, whatever the Pakistani limitations of the operation, Pakistan is carrying out operations in NWA at the US' behest. Consequently, when the Americans get a whiff of an operation, they announce it; forcing a postponement on the Pakistan army. So, maybe it will happen and maybe not but, if it does, it will be on our terms and against our enemy.

### **The Geopolitical scenario: a view from Islamabad**

When I try looking at current happenings in the world, I find myself looking at what seem to be dozens of Kaleidoscopes in motion; some overlapping but all independent. If I focus on one or two at a time, I can occasionally find method in their madness but taken collectively, there seems to be none.

Maybe, like most Pakistanis, I am becoming paranoid, but it seems to me that Pakistan lies at the epicenter of this madness. Even peripheral events will impact on us in one way or the other.

Let us just list some of these events.

China is lying in wait. It is the emerging world economic power and will someday, in the not too distant future begin to lay its claim as the emerging military power of the world. Within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, it has staked its interests in Central Asia and, while doing so, it is prepared to assist and even nurture Russian re-emergence on the world scene, encourages Russia to reestablish its interests in Central Asia and has also indicated that Sino-Russian ties could improve further. They have also found common cause in the Middle East. And China has again expressed its unconditional support to Pakistan.

Russia is reemerging as a major economic power. Having formed the Collective Security Treaty Organization, it has effectively forestalled the establishment of US bases in most of Central Asia. It is also diversifying, by reaching out to Pakistan. President Vladimir Putin's forthcoming visit to Pakistan would have been the maiden visit by any Russian President to Pakistan. Russia had expressed a desire to assist Pakistan in many ways, particularly in the provision of energy. The project of transporting surplus energy from Central Tajikistan to Pakistan and the Iran pipeline project are amongst the numerous projects Russia is prepared to assist with.

The visit, organized by Putin, has been postponed at short notice: why?

While many reasons come to mind, some of them, listed in the fluid dynamics discussed below, two stand out. Foremost is the fact that the Israeli premier, Benjamin Netanyahu, did not get his customary meeting with the US president, on the sidelines of the UNGA meeting in September this year, clearly indicating the US displeasure with Israeli insistence on a war with Iran. As a consequence of which, the Israeli premier announced to the UNGA that he did not see any nuclear threat from Iran developing this year; thus ending that uncertainty.



At the same time, Obama's return to the White House for a second term seems to have become extremely probable, barring the unforeseen. On the other hand, the declaration of Haqqanis as a terrorist network is likely to create its own dynamics in Afghanistan, as I have explained.

It is likely, therefore, that Putin felt that there was no longer a requirement of urgency to his visit and that it could be rescheduled a couple of months later, after the US elections, when things may be clearer. Meanwhile Putin is offering to host another "P5+1 and Iran" grouping. To reassure Pakistan, he has dispatched Sergei Lavrov, Russian foreign minister, on a hastily planned visit, to coincide with Pakistan army chief's visit to Russia.

While activities of these major actors, including the US are clearly understandable chess moves, it is the peripheral events that seem to be spiraling out of control.

The Arab Spring was a movement for restoring a different form of democratic rule in autocratically ruled Arab countries. It was also a move attempting to ensure the end of US hegemony in these Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia. This movement had made Al-Qaeda irrelevant just as the US' relentless targeting of Al-Qaeda leadership had virtually destroyed it.

However, the Arab Spring has been bought off in Saudi Arabia, suppressed in Saudi Arabia's neighborhood, (intended to have been) channelized in Egypt and Tunis, supported by the US for its own purposes in Libya and Syria. But what has been the outcome?

Egypt has declared its independence from the US, the Middle East is seething with hate for the US; American Embassies are in a state of siege. Al-Qaeda has not merely returned to relevance, it is again partnering the CIA to suppress Shias.

Obama's Middle East policy is in shambles. And the US Presidential election is round the corner. Who will be the next US President and what will be the US policies next year.

Will Romney be in the White House? If he is, will he fulfill all his destructive policies that he has announced? If Obama makes it, will his second tenure change him?

The US is a waning power but, it is still the World's sole Super Power for some time to come. Will it lead us into a Third World War in its dying throes and go out in a blaze of glory or will it return the world to some sense of balance before handing over to its successor?

For decades past, the world has watched in amazement as Israel "wagged the American Dog" by the tail. Is that a closed chapter in history? Has Israel's insistence of a senseless invasion of Afghanistan finally woken up the American people and its administration? There are certainly indicators that it has.

Unconditional American support for Israel has never been as unpopular as it is today. An increasing number of American analysts are writing about it and expressing their opposition to Israeli policies on the electronic media.

Quite surprisingly, the strongest official opposition has come from the Pentagon. Even as the US administration was insisting that "all options to force Iran to forego its nuclear opposition are still on the table", senior US military officials were politely but publicly warning against this, even during talks with Israelis. There is a strong rumor that Pentagon might have expressed its opposition to a war with Iran in no uncertain terms to its C-in-C, the President.

Is it possible that, having witnessed their predecessors being accused by junior officers and the rank and file of “lacking the courage to tell the truth about conditions in Afghanistan”, the current military hierarchy have decided that it was time to take courage in hand?

And what is the impact of this movie, “the innocence of Muslims”? That it was made to create the outrage and furor among the Muslims of the world and succeeded in doing so, perhaps beyond the imagination of those who made it, is accepted as fact. But it was completed three months before it was actually released. Was it timed to an event? Was it intended to be a nail in the coffin of Obama’s bid for reelection or was it intended to force his hand into changing his mind and attacking Iran?

The Muslims reacted with their expected, unnecessary violence and, if it succeeded in its one object, it was that of successfully painting Muslims as savages. But it has also multiplied the hate directed at the US for being the Protector in chief of Israel and (seen as) being responsible for this production. The fact that the American First Amendment prevents the US from not permitting it to be aired, only multiplies American complicity in the minds of the ordinary Muslim.

But, was it intended to create conditions for the coming to life of Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations? Has it done so? Or has it, in fact destroyed that possibility forever? Will it impact on the simmering Arab Spring and if so, how?

Too many fluid dynamics and too few known facts for someone with my limited abilities to attempt to predict and peep into the geopolitical scenarios that are possibilities of the future. Each one of the dynamics listed above will impact on the whole world but, due to its tottering economy, internal unrest, location and role in the negotiations for the future of Afghanistan; which will decide whether the US escapes from the region with or without the stigma of being defeated, the impact of the answers to the questions might be felt more strongly in Pakistan, than most other places.

However, I have been asked one specific question in this regard i.e. what are the various “Schools of thought” in the military (specifically the Army) in Pakistan? What are the perceived threats and who are considered the future “friends” and “enemies” in Pakistan?

I am sure you realize that events resulting from the dynamics listed above will impinge upon my answers to these questions. However, within the parameters of what is currently visible, let me attempt an answer.

Let’s start with the Schools of Thought in the Military. While the military is agreed on the fact that their primary enemy is the “enemy within”, the TTP and that we need to improve relations with India, India will remain a threat for some years to come.

The question, however, has a more subtle implication within it: are their divisions within the military on how to deal with India and Afghanistan, as used to exist in earlier times; and could they employ non-state actors to achieve their ends?

I have attempted to explain why such schisms no longer exist. In fact, surprisingly, it seems that, with regard to foreign policy, the Pakistan military and the current elected government is on the same page.

I have no doubts that there are elements in the serving military personnel, for whom the liberation of Indian Kashmir and/or the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan would be high priority. However, these elements are not only very small in numbers but also not in positions where they could influence the decision making process.

I have already covered both these aspects at length but would like to add only one point. I think that the Line of Control in Kashmir has now, more or less, been accepted as the de facto international boundary, our issue with India on Kashmir will be that of water. John Briscoe's article on the subject, "War or peace on the Indus<sup>1</sup>" might be of interest.

An important development is the awareness in Pakistan that Saudi Arabia has been responsible for creating more problems for Pakistan than helping solve them. There is also awareness that the repressive regimes in Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, are on borrowed time. Pakistan's policies towards these regimes need to be carefully crafted to keep the future in mind, while playing the current tune.

The most dramatic shift in Pakistan's foreign policy is the decision to declare its independence from the US. Pakistan has decided that it will no longer accept its previous privileged position of being the US' "pet dog" and has decided to diversify. It has withstood US pressure on different aspects and is actively pursuing its own interests. I will not list incidents here, since I am sure those are well known to the audience this paper addresses.

Even though the US persistence in stoking unrest in Pakistan through indiscriminate drone attacks, willing or (unwilling) succor for elements of the TTP and their Afghan supporters in Afghanistan, the encouragement to Baloch separatist movement it is providing in Balochistan province; all qualify the US as more of an enemy than the "ally" of Pakistan, that it calls itself.

Nonetheless, the last thing Pakistan can afford is to alienate the sole super power of the world. Consequently, while pursuing its own national interests as vigorously as possible, it must tread with care so as to avoid treading on US toes too frequently. So far, Pakistan seems to be managing this difficult balancing act fairly well.

### **What can be done between "now and then" to improve the Afghanistan situation?**

I deliberately left the "then" in the caption above so as to be vague rather than put absolute deadlines. "Then" could extend to 2024 but ideally, in my view, should end with the complete withdrawal of US troops by 2016 at the latest.

There is a distinct possibility that a hurried US withdrawal from Afghanistan will result in a period of chaos. However, it is my considered view that as long as the US maintains a presence in Afghanistan, both Pakistan and Afghanistan will remain unstable and insecure. This in no way implies that a complete US withdrawal will suddenly bring peace and stability to both countries. What it will do is to remove the *raison d'être* of the revolt in both countries; which might, in turn, begin a process of normalization.

The problem is many sided. Apart from the fluid and dynamic geopolitical situation, there is an urgent requirement to chart a course most likely to bring peace to Afghanistan and Pakistan. As I have stated earlier; there cannot be peace in one without peace in the other. On the other hand, there are the compulsions of the US which must also be addressed; a) it cannot be viewed as having been defeated and b) the US should

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<sup>1</sup> Briscoe, a South African, was the Water Expert with the World Bank who helped arbitrate the Indo-Pakistan dispute on Baglihar Dam. This explains his views: <http://thesouthasianidea.wordpress.com/2010/04/03/war-or-peace-on-the-indus/>.

leave with assurances of some economic benefits. My suggestions bear both aspects in mind.

While the US may no longer be in a position to benefit from the economic resources in the region from Central Asia, Afghanistan to Balochistan to the extent that it would like to, it can play the role of the “spoiler”, as it currently is doing, though to a limited degree, preventing other rivals to benefit.

Alternately, the US can accept the consequence of its errors over the past eleven years and seek to salvage whatever is possible for it to do, at this stage. It is well within the realms of possibility that, if the US plays its cards well over the next couple of years, it could still get its share of economic benefits but at competitive rates; not cheaply, at preferential rates.

Sometimes the obvious needs to be stated: the US is in a Vietnam-like mess in Afghanistan. Understandably, it would not like to be seen beating a hasty retreat as it finally had to in 1975 from Saigon.

Since 2009, numerous analysts have suggested that the US “Redefine Victory” for Afghanistan. I suggest that is the starting point: redefining victory and accelerating its withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan, rather than prolonging it. Anatol Lieven suggests something similar, though my suggestion is different. His views can be read here<sup>1</sup>. Elections in Afghanistan are due in 2014. Hamid Karzai would like to be replaced by his own proxy---an arrangement that will not be acceptable to the bulk of the Afghans and, may also not be acceptable to the US. The US also has no made-to-order replacement for Karzai and is caught in a bind.

On the assumption that Obama is likely to be reelected in November, I suggest that, following the election, Obama (re)defines victory in Afghanistan as “the successful conduct of fair and impartial elections in Afghanistan in 2014, followed by a peaceful transition of responsibility for the security of Afghanistan to the new administration”.

He should further announce, “while the US is committed to economically assist its Afghan friends in rebuilding their country and to assist them, by maintaining a limited military presence so as to ensure their domestic security until 2014, if the Afghan government feels sufficiently secure and/or if we are of the view that the newly elected Afghanistan government is capable of handling its domestic security, we will pull out our remaining military forces ASAP”.

These two statements will give US the option of pulling out at any time following the Afghan 2014 elections, without being seen to be “defeated”.

Meantime, I would urge the US to open channels to all Afghan factions, including the Haqqanis. By leaving out the Haqqanis, the US might have hedged its bets so as to have a defined enemy and a well-defined scapegoat in the event of a defeat, but such plans are for those who hedge their bets against defeat, not those who plan to win.

If the US wants to have a chance to win, it needs to realize the obvious: it needs some “goodwill” among the Afghans. While this is still doable, time is short. My suggestions on redefining victory and announcing its willingness to pull out earlier will help reestablish Afghan sovereignty to the Afghan.

It needs to follow up by ensuring a level playing field for all Afghan political players; open the presidential elections to all hopefuls, including the Haqqanis. It should announce that the elections will be held under UN umbrella so as to ensure that they are fair. The UN should immediately step in and negotiate with all stakeholders to select which countries should send troops/observers to help conduct elections.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://snuffysmithsblog.blogspot.com/2012/09/talk-to-taleban-or-risk-messier-vietnam.html>.

Americans and Arabs are unlikely to be acceptable to Afghans. My guess is that Pakistanis, Indians, Swedes, neutral Europeans, Malaysians, Philippines, Thailanders etc. will all be acceptable.

Training of Afghan Security Forces should also be handed over to the representatives from these countries, with the proviso that they recruit afresh. Those trained by American/ISAF/NATO forces will remain suspect to the Afghans.

Induction in the Afghan Police and security forces should be across the ethnic divide but proportionately. Ethnic groupings should be maintained upto the level of a Wing or battalion size force i.e. about 7 to 800 strong under a commander of the same ethnic group. Senior commanders should be selected on the basis of ability.

Were the US to take these steps: promising a an impartial and fair election in Afghanistan, under neutral observers acceptable to the Afghans, enabling them to elect (not another US puppet, but) a leader acceptable to *them*; give the Afghans back their country and their liberty by assuring them of *their* right to decide if they want foreign troops on their soil after the elections; assure them of the US commitment in providing economic assistance to rebuild their country, even if they refuse to host US soldiers on their soil after the elections; the US could win some good will with the Afghans in the next year or two. Enough good will for them to complete the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India, TAPI, pipeline project and, compete for others in Central Asia and Afghanistan, with considerably less apprehension regarding security for projects financed by them.

These are difficult steps to take but “doable” if there is a will. There will be opposition, even from among those who have got used to political power with US support. If, however, the US wants to win support of the common Afghan, it will be far better off annoying the few to please the many. Afghans will be wary of the US when it makes the offer but the US will need to put its money where its mouth is.

Were the US to do so; Pakistan would be more than willing to facilitate in such negotiations. Pakistan too, would be wary of American duplicity just as America is wary of Pakistan’s duplicity. It is unnecessary to draw comparisons to establish which is the less trustworthy of the two countries. Suffice it to say that the trust deficit is sufficiently large on both sides.

Once again, the US could, by a couple of gestures put the onus squarely on Pakistan’s shoulders e.g. if, CIA agents in Balochistan suddenly stopped receiving funds--the ISI would know within days. If, TTP elements in Kunar, Afghanistan came under drone attacks, while the US promised to confine its drone attacks to targets confirmed through shared intelligence (I am reminded of Rudyard Kipling’s poem “If”); but if the US did all this, it would be impossible even for Pakistan, even if it is the most untrustworthy of countries, to be anything other than helpful.

In fact, it would be the best Pakistan could ask for. And, it is probably in the best interest of the US, Afghanistan, and the entire world.

## Conclusion

Without going into the historical overview, I have attempted, to the best of my ability, to provide an accurate background perspective to the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan, as I see it. Based on this perspective, I have attempted to point out current errors of policy and where they might lead to.



I was posed some pointed questions relating to possible responses by the Pakistani military, in view of their perceived record. Without offering any explanations for their past conduct or offering any excuses for them and, there are many of both, without even distributing their errors among those allies who assisted the Pakistan military at that time, I have merely attempted to explain the rationale for their current and (likely) future conduct.

I am conscious that I have been unable to do justice to the emerging geopolitical scenario. However, within the parameters of how the (presently) predictable factors act on the region, I have attempted to be more specific.

I am very conscious of the domestic dynamics of the US. Fortunately, the post-election administration will be dealing with this problem. If President Obama wins his second term, which seems likely, he might enjoy greater “liberty of action” in his decision making.

If he does so, I have suggested a course that might still win him some goodwill among the Afghans. Enough goodwill to be able to draw some economic benefits, while providing the US with an “exit strategy”, based on redefining victory in Afghanistan; such that US is saved from the embarrassment of again being viewed as having suffered another Vietnam-like defeat.

These are difficult times but all is not lost, even for the US. However, almost the entire onus of responsibility for setting things right, lies on the US. If it does so, it could still emerge as not just “not-defeated” but even as enough of a “winner” to claim a genuine victory.

Pakistan cannot afford to be a “spoiler” in Afghanistan but it can be a “reluctant” facilitator or a very willing one. The US could ensure that Pakistan is a very willing facilitator. If the US does all this, the region could find peace in the foreseeable future; maybe very quickly.

**Brigadier- General (rtd) Shaukat Qadir**  
November 2012