

POST-WAR AFGHANISTAN: REBUILDING A RAVAGED NATION

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The post-11 September US-led war against the sources of Islamic extremism and international terrorism inside Afghanistan has been largely a success. It may be only a matter of time before the remaining Taliban and al-Qaeda pockets of resistance in eastern Afghanistan vanish. The refugees are returning home and the UN-supervised peace package is being implemented successfully. By Afghan standards, these are gigantic achievements in such a short span of time. Yet, given this war-wrecked nation's horrendous past, the task ahead is gigantic – including the establishment of a truly broad-based government, the creation of a stable internal and external security environment, and the rebuilding of the economic and social fabric of the country, devastated by over 22 years of war. Afghanistan was the world's worst inheritance from the twentieth century. To make it the best example of the twenty-first century world, the international community under the leadership of the United Nations, has to secure a peaceful, stable and prosperous future for the people of Afghanistan.

History was made on 22 December 2001 when a six-month interim administration, with Pashtun leader Hamid Karzai as its chairman, was installed in Kabul. That day, for the first time in decades, Afghanistan saw a peaceful transfer of power and a gathering of former ethnic foes on the same platform. Under the Bonn Agreement of 5 December 2001, the tenure of the interim administration is to end in June 2002, when a Loya Jirgah, a gathering of notables and tribal leaders from all over Afghanistan (around 1,500 people), is to be held in Kabul under the symbolic leadership of former Afghan king Mohammed Zahir Shah, with the purpose of establishing a provisional government for a period of one-and-a-half years. The final phase of the UN-supervised agreement will be the holding of democratic elections in December 2003. In a country where decades-long warfare has sharpened the ethnic, sectarian and regional divide, future political process will not be smooth. However, what is important is to make a sound start, which has surely been made. In addition, the deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan confirms that the international community has realised that peace cannot be made or achieved without peacekeepers.

After decades of death and destruction, Afghanistan deserves a stable peace so that millions of suffering Afghan people inside and outside the country can be rehabilitated, and a thoroughly decimated infrastructure re-constructed. The key challenge facing Afghanistan today is economic and social, reflective of a deep humanitarian crisis. However, to meet it effectively, the country must have credible political and security foundations. What is required is that no faction from within Afghanistan and no country from its neighbourhood be allowed to hamper the internationally supervised processes of political peace and military security. What is needed is that the huge task of rebuilding Afghanistan should be accomplished soon – and without any problems. All of this will be impossible to achieve with an international peacekeeping operation that is limited in size, operational role and span. Thus, it would be better if the mandate of ISAF were extended beyond the six-month deadline of June 2002, its number doubled or tripled, and its operational scope expanded to that of maintaining peace and security beyond the confines of the Afghan capital.¹

THE PRINCIPAL CHALLENGE

The most daunting challenge in post-war Afghanistan is reconstruction of the country and rehabilitation of its population. So far, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United States, the European Union, Japan and all other interested countries and international concerns seem committed to finance or undertake the economic reconstruction and social rehabilitation of Afghanistan. The United States can take the lead in financing the re-building of the infrastructure, the regeneration of the economy and rehabilitation of the people of Afghanistan by spending as much money as, for instance, was consumed by its bombing campaign. However, since the rebuilding of Afghanistan is the collective responsibility of the world, all interested institutions and states will have to work in a co-ordinated fashion to achieve the urgently desired targets.²

Before the start of US air strikes on Afghanistan in October 2001, some seven million people inside Afghanistan were reported to be urgently in need of humanitarian assistance. In addition, between five to seven million Afghans were said to be living as refugees outside their country. The present in-country population is estimated at 18 to 20 million and if all refugees were to return the population would be about 25 million. Seven million people in need of humanitarian help inside the country plus five to seven million refugees make between 12 to 14 million people. That means nearly half of the Afghan population is in need of social rehabilitation. In addition, Afghanistan's infrastructure is in ruins. The decades-long war has destroyed virtually all transport, telecommunications, irrigation, power generation and industrial facilities. It has left no bridge, no dam, no water reservoir, no road, no power generation unit, no irrigation network, no industry, not even a hotel, intact. While people need housing, institutions need buildings. The cost of rebuilding Afghanistan is likely to be huge.

The international community has thus far responded positively to the urgent need for reconstructing Afghanistan. At a high level inter-ministerial meeting on Assistance for Afghanistan Reconstruction, held 21-22 January 2002 in Tokyo, some 60 nations and 20 international organisations – led by Japan, the European Union and the United States – pledged at least \$4.5 billion towards rebuilding Afghanistan, of which more than \$1 billion is due in 2002. The amount almost matches the earlier estimates of what it will cost to begin the reconstruction of Afghanistan over the next two and a half years, ranging from \$2 billion to \$3 billion.³ That means an amount of \$8 billion to \$12 billion is required to meet the targets of rebuilding Afghanistan in the next ten years. The scale of the challenge across a number of sectors is enormous. For example, one in four children die before the age of five; one in 12 women die in childbirth; primary school enrolment for girls is six percent (only in the northern and north-eastern regions which were not under Taliban rule); central and commercial banking has collapsed; only six percent of Afghans had access to electricity in 1993; only two in 1,000 have telephones; more than half of the primary road network is seriously deteriorated; and over seven million Afghans are vulnerable to severe food shortages.⁴ The reconstruction of Afghanistan cannot be separated from longer-term economic and social development. Merely restoring the pre-1978 economic situation in Afghanistan would leave the country one of the poorest in the world in terms of both incomes and social indicators. This would make the task of maintaining political stability and promoting national integration very difficult and would leave Afghanistan vulnerable to a resurgence of conflict.⁵

The task of social rehabilitation may prove to be most difficult. In Afghanistan, we are

dealing with a people who have only one skill: how to fight a war. The people in need of rehabilitation are not just refugees or displaced sections of the society; they include the warriors who spent their days and nights for years with rifles and machine guns and rocket launchers and tanks. How to teach them the norms of normal life? How to equip them with the skills needed to live a daily life the same way as people in peacetime societies generally do? In Afghanistan, we are dealing with a population part of which was brainwashed by the Taliban to develop a medieval worldview accepting religious orthodoxy and rejecting secular modernity. How to bring these people back from the world of passion to the world of reason? The Taliban rejected globalisation and deprived the Afghan people of the benefits of the information age. How to enable these people who chose to bravely face the atrocious Taliban rule to cope with the demands and challenges of a highly competitive world of today?

One of the major tasks for the post-Taliban leadership will be how to fill the intellectual vacuum, how to overcome the crisis of modernity, how to bridge the civilisation gulf.⁶ In particular, the education sector suffered heavily at the hands of the Taliban, who not only forced girls out of schools and women out of work but also never shied from displaying an outright disdain for modern learning. Thus, in addition to conventional educational institutions offering services at all levels and in all forms, a network of technical and vocational institutes needs to be established where returning refugees, internally displaced persons and professional fighters can enrolled and get an education. The Afghans also require psychological assistance in order to recover from the traumatic experience of the recent past. A whole generation of Afghans has lived under abnormal conditions. It must not be expected to start behaving normally overnight.

GOOD RIDDANCE, WHAT NEXT?

Taliban rule was a period of great regression, when the march of history in Afghanistan was put in reverse gear. The demise of the Taliban is the greatest blessing for the Afghan people. The Taliban regime was always a house of cards. The Taliban had risen to power in the absence of any credible internal military opposition. It had filled the political and military vacuum created by the collapse of the communist government of Dr Muhammad Najibullah in 1992 – a vacuum that the government of Burhanuddin Rabbani failed to fill during its four years rule. Throughout this time, the government forces led by Tajik-Afghan commander Ahmad Shah Masood remained busy fighting the Uzbek-Afghan forces led by General Abdul Rashid Dostum north of Kabul, and the Hizbi Islami forces led by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar from his stronghold of Charasayab southeast of the Afghan capital. The waning government authority led to warlordism across the country. The rise of the Taliban from the southern province of Kandahar was a direct reaction to the reign of terror practised by rival commanders acting independently of government authority in Kabul.

However, as the Taliban started to expand westward and northward from Kandahar, Pakistan perceived a strategic advantage in helping the Taliban. The state authorities in Pakistan looked the other way when thousands of medrese students, mostly Afghan-refugee youth, crossed the porous Durand Line to join hands with the Taliban. Since independence in 1947, Pakistan had been dreaming of having a friendly government in Afghanistan and the rise of the Taliban appeared to fulfil that dream. That is why Pakistan was the first country to recognise the Taliban regime. Until 11 September, Pakistan remained the Taliban's chief external supporter and, until a few days after the US air assault on Afghanistan started, Islamabad hosted their ambassador. In the light of the 11 September acts of terror in the United States, Pakistan had no option but to ditch the Taliban and join the US-led coalition

against international terrorism. However, before the US attack started, Pakistan made all possible efforts to save the Taliban regime by trying to convince its leadership to hand over Osama bin Laden to the United States. After failing to convince the Taliban leadership, Islamabad finally had to admit publicly that there was no other option left but war. As the Taliban lost their last external supporter, their days were numbered. However, the routing of the Taliban regime occurred primarily because it never had a popular base.⁷

The 11 September brought about a tectonic shift in the strategic landscape of West Asia, forcing Pakistan to again assume the role of a frontline state – this time, against a friendly power in Afghanistan. The UN Security Council invoked Chapter Seven of the UN Charter, permitting the use of force against the Taliban regime for harbouring bin Laden and al-Qaeda terrorists, whom Washington held responsible for the acts of terror in the United States. And, when bombs started to fall on the Taliban and al-Qaeda, it did not take that long for the hollowness of the Taliban's claim to political power and religious purity to expose itself fully before the entire world. The defeat of the Taliban and al-Qaeda at the hands of the US-led forces was clear since the former were equipped with only illusions rooted in a medieval religious belief system while the latter represented the forces of modernity equipped with a high-tech military arsenal. So, this newest war in human history basically reflected a clash between passion and reason, bigotry and modernity, illusion and reality. Therefore, the conclusion of the war was clear even before it began. What has surprised everyone is the speed with which the demise of the Taliban and al-Qaeda occurred.

Contrary to sharpening the divide between Islam and the West, the humiliating demise of the Taliban and al-Qaeda may finally liberate the Muslim nations and people across the world from illusionary and reactionary religious attitudes upon which the trans-national militant movements, such as al-Qaeda, have thrived in the recent past. The Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders had a great illusion that if they could cause the demise of one superpower, the Soviet Union, by defeating its forces in Afghanistan, they could also destroy the only remaining superpower, the United States, by bringing their terrorist war into America. The truth, however, is that in the absence of CIA money and arms it would have been difficult for the Mujahidin to defeat the Soviets. The 11 September indeed shook the United States in the beginning, but it did not take the country long to recover. In fact, by winning the war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, the United States may have actually increased its global politico-military clout.

The fate that the Taliban and al-Qaeda and their leaders have met will be a great lesson for the existing and potential aspirants of trans-national religious terrorism. The Western engagement in the post-war peacekeeping and rebuilding of Afghanistan proves that Islam and the West can march together for a common cause; that the world of tomorrow will be based on a partnership of civilisations, rather than a clash of civilisations. That ISAF, which is to be commanded for an equal period by Britain and Turkey, is the best example of this new partnership of civilisations, whose foundations were already laid in the Balkans. Such international initiatives will surely help remove anti-Western feelings from Muslim minds. It is good that the beginning of this long-desired goal was made from Afghanistan, where the Taliban and their 'foreign guests' tried their best to sharpen the division between the West and Islam. Given that, by making Afghanistan a great success story, the international community will not only meet the aspirations of the Afghan people, it will also help bridge the gulf between Islam and the West.

ACHIEVING POLITICAL STABILITY

How to achieve a broad-based political set up in Afghanistan is a huge task facing the international community, even if the historic start towards this end has already been made. The only way this task can be achieved is by accommodating Afghanistan's nasty ethnic divisions and personality cults in the short run. However, the long-term strategy must be based on bridging the ethnic divisions in the population and empowering the Afghan people to stop following the dictates of their respective ethnic warlords.

Approximately 40 percent of Afghans, inside and outside the country, are estimated to be Pashtun; Tajiks make up the second largest ethnic group, with 25.3 percent of the population; followed by Hazaras, 18 percent; Uzbeks, 6.3 percent; Turkmen, 2.5 percent; Qizilbash, 1 percent; and several others form the rest of the 6.9 percent of the population.⁸ Now if we look at the composition of the current interim administration in Kabul, the distribution and sharing of government power seems to accommodate the country's peculiar ethnic diversity. Interim leader Karzai is Pashtun. His 29-member cabinet, which includes two women, is made up of 11 Pashtuns, eight Tajiks, five Hazaras, three Uzbeks and three from other minorities. However, the Tajiks hold the key ministerial positions. The defence, interior and foreign ministers – Muhammad Qasim Fahim, Yunis Qanooni and Dr Abdullah Abdullah – are all Tajiks from the Panjshir valley. It is, therefore, natural on the part of three other main factional leaderships – Pashtun, Uzbek and Hazara – to express reservations about the Tajik domination of the current interim set up in Kabul.

The key requirement now is to build upon the achievements of the first phase of implementation of the Bonn agreement in the second phase, which was to begin with the holding of a Loya Jirgah in June 2002. It was wise of the UN envoy to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, to ignore the Tajik-Afghan leaders' opposition to the convening of the Loya Jirgah under the symbolic chairmanship of the former king, Zahir Shah. Despite his ailing health, Zahir Shah is the only leader who can really unite the ethnically-divided Afghan population. The Loya Jirgah must overcome the shortcomings of the first phase of the Bonn Agreement by broadening and democratising the power-sharing arrangements at the central and provincial levels. If this is done, there is no reason why the democratic elections of December 2003 should not produce a genuinely broad-based government in Afghanistan.

EXPANDING UN PEACEKEEPING

If the international community wishes Afghan peacemaking, reconstruction and rehabilitation to proceed smoothly, it has to extend the timeframe of the UN multinational security force in Afghanistan and expand its peacekeeping role. According to UN Security Council Resolution 1386, concerning the deployment of multinational forces in Afghanistan, "The responsibility for providing security and law and order throughout Afghanistan resides with the Afghans themselves." While the ISAF is not mandated to operate beyond Kabul and its surrounding areas, even in this limited area of operations, it has to act "in close consultation with the Interim Authority" of Afghanistan. Interestingly, while giving a limited timeframe and operational scope to the UN security mission inside Afghanistan, the Security Council stresses that "all Afghan forces must adhere strictly to their obligations under human rights law, including respect for the rights of women, and under international humanitarian law."⁹

How can a limited multinational force operating only in and around its capital city maintain human rights and law and order across a country as vast as Afghanistan? That is why not just the ISAF command but also the interim leadership have repeatedly emphasised the need to

deploy UN peacekeepers beyond Kabul and its surroundings. There is no doubt that ISAF is vitally significant to the post-war peace, stability and progress of Afghanistan. The US air and ground forces' efforts, with the assistance of its European allies, to deal with pockets of Taliban and al-Qaeda resistance in eastern Afghanistan may take some more time. But it is not a long-term mission, as Washington has ruled out any permanent US military presence in Afghanistan. Therefore, the longer-run mission to stabilise Afghanistan falls on the shoulders of ISAF. For Afghanistan's future depends upon the realisation of the following three objectives:

- Achieving a broad-based government;
- Preventing outside interference;
- Rebuilding Afghanistan.

These three inter-related objectives can be achieved smoothly by extending the timeframe of the ISAF, expanding its peacekeeping role and increasing its size.

Achieving a Broad-Based Government

Given Afghanistan's conflict-ridden recent past, it is not logical to expect the Afghans to provide for their own security and maintain law and order on their own. The first and foremost requirement of creating a broad-based government in Afghanistan is to prevent intra-Afghan rivalries and excesses on ethnic grounds. Since the Tajik Afghans benefited the most from the US bombing and the consequent routing of the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces, they have managed to consolidate their political hold in the new corridors of power in Kabul – so much so that they have started to present late Ahmad Shah Masood, known as the Lion of Punjshahr, as a legendary hero. The non-Tajik leadership, both inside and outside the interim administration, will not like any bid by the Tajik leaders to monopolise political power in Afghanistan. Since their role in defeating the Taliban and al-Qaeda was extremely limited, the Tajik-Afghans do not deserve powerful positions in the interim administration.

When non-Pashtun warlords such as General Dostum and Ismail Khan, the governor of Herat, express reservations against the domination of the interim administration by Tajik-Afghans, they do so because of their personal greed for power. On the other hand, when Pashtun leaders like Pir Sayed Ali Gailani criticise the new political arrangements in the Afghan capital on the same basis, they make a serious point: the Pashtun, the largest ethnic group of Afghanistan and, therefore, the traditional wielder of political power, is marginalised in the new set up. The stigma of the Taliban may continue to haunt the Pashtun (since the Taliban were primarily Pashtun) for some time to come. It can only be removed if a credible Loya Jirgah is organised in June 2002 under Zahir Shah's leadership so that the Pashtuns' genuinely popular leaders can represent them. The ISAF command has to make sure that the political process remains smooth and that no factional leadership exploits the post-Taliban political order by committing excesses against the opponents.

Preventing Outside Interference

Afghanistan has been a victim of outside interference for decades. The Soviet Union and its successor, Russia, and the United States, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and India have all interfered in Afghan affairs in various ways: committing aggression,

fighting proxy wars or arming one Afghan faction or a group within a faction against another. Given that, in addition to ensuring domestic military security by preventing hitherto warring Afghan factions from renewing hostilities, the ISAF has to keep their former regional backers at bay as well as prevent post-Taliban Afghanistan from becoming a strategic playground in any future Great Power rivalry over the exploitation of Central Asian oil and natural gas riches.

At least four of the external powers that interfered in Afghanistan's internal affairs have learnt very bitter lessons, and, therefore, are unlikely to repeat the same mistake again. The Soviet defeat in Afghanistan has been an important lesson for the Russians. The 11 September teaches America a lesson that John K. Cooley had interestingly narrated in the concluding lines of his 1999 book, *Unholy Wars: America, Afghanistan and International Terrorism*: "When you decide to go to war against your main enemy (the Soviet Union), take a good, long look at the people behind you whom you chose as your friends, allies or mercenary fighters. Look well to see whether these allies already have unleashed their knives – and are pointing them at your own back."¹⁰ The Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders were nothing but former Afghan and Arab Mujahidin leaders who were aided and abetted by the United States to defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan during the 1980s. Since Washington abandoned them quickly even before the last of the Soviet troops left Afghanistan in 1989, the reactionary Islamic warriors felt a deep sense of betrayal by the United States, and that translated into a deep hatred for America, and that, in turn, manifested itself in the 11 September tragedy. Washington must never back a reactionary religious force to achieve its strategic global aims, since there is every likelihood of such a force eventually becoming a Frankenstein monster.

The lesson that Saudi Arabia has learnt is similar to America's. Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden – who fought as one of the leaders of the Arab-Afghan war against the Soviet communists in Afghanistan – was an insider to the Saudi royal family. Yet in the 1990s, he emerged as the chief opponent of the Saudi monarchy, calling openly for its overthrow. Like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia had also acted prematurely in recognising the Taliban regime soon after Kabul fell to the religious militia in September 1996. That was a mistake, given that the same regime soon harboured Osama and al-Qaeda, which called for jihad against "the Americans and their allies, military and civilian." For its part, Pakistan has also learnt a bitter lesson for backing the Taliban, which not only defamed and isolated the country in the world, but also Taliban-ised parts of Pakistani society. It is no surprise then that while the war against reactionary Islamic forces in Afghanistan is almost over, Pakistan's fight against Islamic and sectarian extremists will most likely be a long haul.

The ISAF must ensure that none of the above powers is allowed to interfere with the domestic situation in Afghanistan in any way. No strategic, religious, economic, political or military reasoning by any outside power situated in Afghanistan's neighbourhood or elsewhere, can justify its interference in Afghan affairs. Now that the threat of reactionary Islam from Afghanistan has disappeared, the Central Asian states and Russia should have no interest in arming their protégés in northern Afghanistan. However, two external factors could still have a negative impact on future security, stability and peace in Afghanistan.

First, Iran's revolutionary leadership would not like the former Afghan king to play even a symbolic role of uniting the people of Afghanistan as that might act as a regional precedent for the comeback of the Pehalvi dynasty in Iran, where moderate forces have been on the rise for quite some time. Despite the fact that Iran played no significant role in defeating the Soviets in Afghanistan, except hosting refugees and giving sanctuary to some Shia Hazara

Afghan Mujahidin leaders, it played an active part in intra-Afghan warfare from the September 1996 demise of the Rabbani regime until September 2001. Given that, in post-war Afghanistan, Tehran should be discouraged from backing the Hazara Afghan leadership, through whom it might try to sabotage the June 2002 Loya Jirgah, called and presided over symbolically by Zahir Shah. The domestic political concerns of the Iranian leadership should not be allowed to hamper the political process in Afghanistan. The United States has already included Iran as one of the three countries whom US President George W Bush identified as as part of the “axis of evil” in his January 2002 State of the Union address. Accordingly, Washington must tighten its noose around Tehran to discourage it from using its clout in the Hazara community of southwestern and western Afghanistan (especially Herat province) to sabotage the UN-supervised peace process in Kabul.

The second external factor that might hamper the security and political situation in Afghanistan is the rivalry between Pakistan and India. During Taliban rule, India had militarily backed the Northern Alliance, especially the Tajik-Afghans. Therefore, as soon as Kabul came under the control of Tajik-Afghan warlords, India was quick to send a delegation led by S. K. Lambah, the country’s envoy to Afghanistan, to the Afghan capital. The Indian perception is that, with the demise of the Taliban, Pakistan has been defeated in Afghanistan. Therefore, it is now India’s turn to establish its sphere of influence in Afghanistan and play a leading role in the country’s rebuilding. One example of Pakistan-Indian rivalry over Afghanistan is that within days of New Delhi announcing an aid package of \$100 million for Afghanistan, Islamabad also announced exactly the same amount in aid for rebuilding Afghanistan. For its part, Pakistan aspires for a friendly Afghan government and is trying to cultivate good ties with the country’s new leadership. In April 2002, Pakistani President, General Pervez Musharraf, visited Kabul, in response to an earlier visit to Islamabad by Mr Karzai. On both occasions, both leaders expressed a strong desire to foster closer ties, and fight the scourge of terrorism. To India’s dismay, a number of factors still go in Pakistan’s favour in the post-Taliban period. These include Pakistan’s geographical proximity to Afghanistan, the traditional ethnic and economic linkages between the two countries, the Afghan dependency on Pakistan for its transit trade, and the fact that the most suitable outlet for future oil and natural gas pipelines from Central Asia through Afghanistan will be Pakistan.

The ISAF must prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a victim of India-Pakistan rivalry. It must, in particular, dissuade New Delhi from using Afghanistan as a platform to create a security threat for Pakistan from across the Durand Line. Otherwise, the security dilemma for Pakistan, already facing a growing security threat from its eastern borders with India, could worsen. Sandwiched between two enemies, nuclear-armed Pakistan could experience the resurgence of radical or nationalistic forces, a potentially volcanic development that would be in no one’s interest.

Rebuilding Afghanistan

If post-war Afghanistan is not reconstructed and rehabilitated credibly, there is every possibility of a revival of the intra-Afghan conflict and religious extremism in the country. A socially and economically depressive climate is a breeding ground for reactionary attitudes and ethnic grievances. The ISAF is crucial to the rebuilding of Afghanistan, since the progress on all internationally financed private and public projects for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan requires a secure environment throughout the country. The extremely bleak humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is the result of decades of war. The

country has also faced drought for the last three years, which worsened in 2001, causing widespread famine. No surprise that international aid and relief agencies have faced difficulty in transporting relief goods to the famine-ridden areas or even their safe storage in the country. The war may be over, but the humanitarian situation remains acute. The visible presence of the ISAF across the length and breadth of Afghanistan would go a long way to overcoming the humanitarian crisis in the short-term as well as meeting the long-term targets of economic reconstruction and social rehabilitation.

Not just Kabul but the whole of Afghanistan needs to be demilitarised and disarmed if the international community wishes to achieve a long-lasting political settlement in Afghanistan, to secure the country from both internal and external destabilising forces, and to rebuild its economic and social foundations in a credible manner. Since keeping arms or displaying them publicly is an essential part of the Afghan tribal culture, any talk of completely disarming the Afghan population is idealistic. However, demilitarisation of the country is possible by prohibiting the possession, display and use of firearms individually or collectively for political reasons. Last but not the least, Afghanistan cannot be rebuilt until and unless it is de-mined. A study funded by the World Bank estimated that in recent years as many as 500 people a month were victims of mine accidents and unexploded ordnance, which now also includes cluster bombs dropped by B-52 bombers in the recent US-led war. Mines are everywhere in Afghanistan. The ISAF, with locally trained de-miners, can play a crucial role in de-mining the country, which is likely to cost around \$500 million alone.¹¹

While the world's chief financial players have to sustain their assistance in both financial and human capital as well as technical help as long as the rebuilding of Afghanistan requires, it would be better if the Afghans alone accomplished the longer-run targets of economic development and social growth. The well-educated Afghan diaspora in the West as well as the skilled manpower in the country and among the refugee population will not only be useful in the initial stages of rebuilding but can also be used, along with the freshly trained Afghans, to rebuild the country indigenously. Additionally, as part of this longer run strategy, the emphasis should be on enabling the Afghans to self-finance the rebuilding effort. This goal can be realised by encouraging the world's key oil companies, especially from countries contributing to the international peacekeeping and rebuilding effort in Afghanistan, to conclude agreements with the regional governments concerned, and resume work on laying oil and natural gas pipelines from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan. Such projects would not only employ the Afghans, but, upon completion, would also enable the cash-starved Afghan state to earn hundreds of millions of dollars a year in royalties.

Post-war Afghanistan needs a fully integrated international rebuilding effort. Since the progress on international reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan depends upon the success of the UN-supervised peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts, the world community has to quickly and simultaneously move forward on four fronts – political, security, economic and social. The role of the ISAF, however, is the most crucial. It would be better if the size of the multinational peacekeeping force was doubled or tripled. In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which saw only a few years of war, the United States alone has had 20,000 peacekeepers. It is nonsensical to assume that an international force of around 5,000 can maintain security in a country devastated by decades of war and the accompanying death and destruction, famine and disease, misery and suffering. The stationing of an operationally expanded ISAF until the implementation of the three-phase UN peace plan by December 2003 – or even beyond, if the situation requires – will go a long way to realising the existing international political will for peace and progress in Afghanistan.

1 UN Security Council Resolution 1386, adopted unanimously on 20 December 2001, limits the operational scope of the ISAF to merely “assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas, so that the Afghan Interim Authority as well as the personnel of the United Nations can operate in a secure environment”.

2 The holding of three successive international conferences for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan between November 2001 and January 2002 confirmed that such a co-ordinated international effort was indeed being made. First, the World Bank (WB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organised jointly a conference on ‘Preparing for Afghanistan’s Reconstruction’, in Islamabad on 27-29 November 2001. The conference laid the basis for a multi-sector needs assessment for Afghanistan, while stressing the need to “see Afghanistan through the eyes of Afghans.” As a follow-up to the conference, the WB-UNDP-ADP released their ‘Preliminary Needs Assessment of Afghanistan’s Reconstruction’. Second, on 11-13 December 2001, the Japan Platform, an organisation composed of NGOs, academia, media and government officials, hosted the ‘NGOs Conference in Tokyo on the Reconstruction of Afghanistan’, which aimed to allow those at grassroots level to have a voice in early stages of implementing the policy of reconstruction. Third, the Tokyo inter-ministerial meeting deliberated upon the WB-UNDP-ADP Preliminary Needs Assessment as well as recommendations of the NGOs conference in Tokyo in the light of the 13-point plan for the reconstruction of Afghanistan presented by the interim leader of Afghanistan. It was attended, among others, by Mr Karzai and US Secretary of State Colin Powell.

3 See The World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and United Nations Development Programme, ‘Afghanistan’s Reconstruction: Preliminary Needs Assessment Offers Initial View of Costs and Programs’, News Release No. 2002/167/SAR, 20 December 2001. Other estimates point out the cost of rebuilding Afghanistan to be double. For instance, one estimate being bandied about by NGOs for the cost of repairing the war damage in Afghanistan is more than Euro 28.5 billion over a ten-year period. See David Cronin, ‘Why Winning the Peace will be Tougher than Defeating the Taliban’, *European Voice*, 29 November-5 December 2001.

4 The WB-UNDP-ADP ‘Preliminary Needs Assessment’ lays out examples of possible high-priority programmes, which include: mine clearance to maximise public safety and return land to productive use; a basic package of health services focused on reducing child and maternal mortality; an education programme to enrol in school 1.2 to 1.5 million girls and boys; rapid increase of food production through irrigation and various agriculture programmes; increased access to safe water; shelter to facilitate resettlement and the development of a national urban management capacity; emergency energy supply and repair while restoring the existing power system; employment generation, both urban and rural; support for local-level and community schemes in water supply, roads, education and health; and programmes to create a conducive socio-economic environment for returning refugees.

5 See ‘Afghanistan: World Bank Approach’, paper presented at the International Conference on ‘Preparing for Afghanistan’s Reconstruction’, organised jointly by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, Islamabad, 27-29 November 2001. The proceedings of the conference – as well as several other important studies on Afghanistan’s reconstruction and rehabilitation – are available at

<http://www.developmentgateway.org>.

6 This author emphasised the external dimension of this civilisation gap in Perceptions' previous special issue on Afghanistan (Vol. V, No. 4, December 2000-February 2001), by bracketing Afghanistan under the Taliban and its chief external backer Pakistan on one side, and the rest of the international community, on the other. "On one side, we have the Islamic warriors of Afghanistan ready to wage jihad anywhere in the world, and a military regime in Pakistan that courts their cause and ignores its own jihadi forces. On the other side, we have a civilised world, which is increasingly adopting democratic and secular norms and values in accordance with the spirit of globalisation." (p 68)

7 For Pakistan's Taliban connection, read Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, London, I B Tauris, 2000, pp. 183-195.

8 These figures are taken from the US Library of Congress Country Report on Afghanistan, 1996. See <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/aftoc.html>, accessed on 2 January 2002.

9 For an analysis of Security Council Resolution 1386, see Ishtiaq Ahmad, 'Afghan Peacekeeping', *Pakistan Observer*, 24 December 2001. Annex 1 to the Bonn Agreement uses the same words as UN Security Council Resolution 1386 as far as limiting the deployment of the ISAF to Kabul and surrounding areas is concerned.

10 John K Cooley, *Unholy Wars: America, Afghanistan and International Terrorism*, London, Pluto Press, 1999, p. 241.

11 In the case of de-mining, clearance of identified high-priority minefields can be roughly estimated to cost around \$200 million (compared with a total of about \$150 million spent on the mine action programme during 1991-1999). However, with peace, large numbers of refugees would be returning and more marginal lands would be exploited, so it is likely that minefields previously identified as low-priority would become higher-priority and also would need to be cleared. It would cost close to \$300 million to clear all identified low-priority minefields, implying a total price tag of around \$500 million for mine clearance.