

Pashtun Research Advocacy and Policy Centre - Canada (PRAP Canada) is an independent think-tank that conducts research on social, political, cultural, and economic issues relevant to the 50 million Pashtuns around the world. PRAP Canada, through a series of events and publications will project the thorough picture of the Pashtuns in the current political, economic and social setting. We believe that our studies are beneficial for the integration of the Pashtun people in the "Global Community" as well as for a better understanding of Pashtun people around the world.

PRAP Canada is also studying the inter-ethnic relations between Pashtuns and other nationalities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. PRAP centre will facilitate understanding and economic relations, as well as post war trauma healing among different ethnic groups.

PRAP Canada will provide positive input regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan. This input will constitute a package of recommendations, area studies, educational materials, historical and economic data, as well as Pashtuns' strengths and weaknesses. PRAP Canada will make every effort to conduct these studies free of political, ethnic and religious bias. PRAP Canada will invest its time in creating a new source of reliable information for researchers, policy makers, students and politicians.

PRAP has conducted a series of studies and public opinion polls in Afghanistan and Tribal areas. These studies and polls were focused on the current political, economic, military and social fabric of the Afghan society.

Following is a study about the current situation in Pashtun dominated areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

## **I. Pakistan**

This study is based on two major components:

- An extensive dialogue with Pashtun intellectuals, academia, journalists, lawyers, and politicians.

- PRAP Canada's recent Public Opinion Survey conducted in Karak, Dir, Swabi, Peshawar and other Districts. The poll indicates the following changes in the public opinion:
  - a) The economy is gradually moving forward and the private sector is taking a lead in the economy. The main source of income for Pashtuns in the south of the Durand line is the sale of labour force to the Gulf countries. The establishment of new labour markets in Karachi, Kabul, Jalal Abad and other areas in Afghanistan are attracting a number of Pashtun labourers in the construction, carpentry, and skilled labour areas. In addition, Pashtuns in Pakistan are skilled workers and they can easily compete in the labour markets in Afghanistan. Currently, more than 80,000 Pashtuns are working in Afghanistan, where they have established good working relationships with their employers. In fact, there is no mechanism of attracting skilled workers in Afghanistan. The current flow of labour is a natural flow and is dictated by the short traveling distance for Pashtuns as well as easy employment terms for Afghan employers. By creating a proper government regulatory mechanism and ease in the traveling and accommodation standards, Pashtuns can potentially be attracted to the Afghan markets. This situation will create a natural opposite to the export of extremist ideology from Pakistan to Afghanistan. Pashtuns from the same villages will create financial interests in Afghanistan and their relatives and religious leaders will create resistance to the export of war and extremist ideology. The Track Two Diplomacy (TTD) presented by PRAP Canada can serve as a reasonable model for creating such economic, social and cultural contacts and relations without vertical dictation from the governments of both countries.
  - b) Currently, the Pashtun society in NWFP is under the strict control of the religious elements. Pashtuns are divided over the issues of insurgency and Taliban from one side and the new democratic Afghanistan from the other side. There is a growing alienation among the public towards government policies due to corruption and mismanagement in the religious conservative led government in NWFP.
  - c) The public is also divided over the role of political parties and its leaders. The religious parties have exhausted their potentials and the nationalist (moderate)

groups are not ready yet to take the lead. Lack of support to nationalist movement over the past decade, which had been traditionally provided by Afghanistan's government, is another factor of weakness in the nationalist movement. The current situation gives the Pakistan government a free hand in choosing the next leading power in the tribal areas. The Pakistani establishment traditionally gives preference to an anti Afghan government in NWFP.

- d) The significance of the Pashtun society is its readiness for social and political changes. The younger generation is ready to take a chance and participate in the change. The second level Pashtun nationalist leaders understand the situation and are a reasonable force if they are mobilized. Many second level Pashtun nationalists such as young doctors, lawyers, trades people, engineers and social workers have created contacts and friendships with Afghan counterparts during the years of forced migration of Afghans to the south east. Some of these links have been vanished due to war and lack of communication. There is a significant opportunity in re-establishing cultural relations as media, news papers, TV and show business contacts between these two groups who share the same culture, but live in different countries. Pashtuns have overwhelmingly voted for a modern education for both genders, which is a significant indication of an undergoing change in the Pashtun society. Our survey is showing the change in psychology of the Pashtun male population. Higher and post secondary education in universities, access to the latest changes in technology and access to outside world development, particularly progress in the western world, have contributed to the formation of new Pashtun modern and intellectual society. Current Pashtun civil society is advocating for full participation of women in the social, economic and political affairs of the community in NWFP and Balochstan. Unfortunately, the civil society in the above areas, are under pressure from the government side, as well as from the fundamentalist and conservative parties, who are also supported by different government agencies. However, there is a strong Pashtun sector, which envisions an important role for them in future political and social change.
- e) Pashtuns have realized the widening gap between their spoken and written languages. Their vote for basic education in their mother tongue and modern

education in English speaks of their awareness. The growth in education is positive, yet far from what it should be. There is a significant growth in religious schools, where guiding factor in this regard is overwhelming poverty in the poor communities. The religious schools are free of cost and are subsidized by the religious parties, a number of government agencies as well as from the donors abroad. These schools are also attractive due to its accommodation and closeness to the religious values of Pashtuns. If religious schools are affordable to the mostly poor Pashtuns, the flawed governmental education system is not given any weight and costly private sector education is out of their reach. Basically, Pashtuns are left only with one choice; sending their children to religious schools (Madrassas), as they do not have access to government schools or costly private education. PRAP believes that a positive move by the government, as well as NGOs, to popularize Pashto written language, would contribute to modern education among Pashtun children, including Pashtun girls.

- f) The situation in Southern Pashtunkhwa (Belochistan) is hostile due to the presence of Taliban groups and their leadership cells. Nationalist groups are under threat and a number of their leaders have been killed by the Taliban and their sponsors. The Beloch factor strengthens the Pashtun cause. There are a significant amount of contacts and understanding among Pashtuns and Beloches. A large number of Pashtun militias, who fought the Mujahedeen and the Taliban in the 80s and 90s are living in Quetta and are a silent opposition to the Taliban regime. They are preoccupied with their lives and do not have much in their hands to advocate for civil society. The younger generation of anti Taliban and anti extremist groups is also enjoying the use of new technology and the internet to receive education and self empowerment. A large number of moderate anti conservative Pashtun youth have left for jobs to Gulf countries. They bring money, information and a modern lifestyle to the Pashtun villages and towns. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the public opinion is slowly changing towards democracy and moderation in the heartland of the Taliban.

## II. Afghanistan

There are three major threats in the way of young Afghan democracy.

1. The Insurgency and the foreign support to insurgency operations in the country.
2. The inside government and inside parliament opposition
3. The corruption and systemic problems in the government.

We would like to put emphases on all these threats to Afghanistan.

### I. **T**he insurgency

Insurgency in Afghanistan has a long history. The modern insurgency has been established with the financial help of the West against the pro Soviet regimes in Afghanistan. Insurgency and anti government activities are popular in Afghanistan due to several economic, cultural, religious and tribal reasons.

If a group of people do not agree with the policies and decisions of governments, tribes or other groups, the subject group organizes insurgency activities.

There are examples of insurgency within the same tribe against the decisions made by the leaders. Although Afghan and Pashtun society is more democratic in its major decisions, there is always an option for a group of people to oppose the decisions with military means.

Insurgency did not always succeed in Afghanistan. There are cases of insurgency and anti government uprising that was brought down by the leaders of uprising due to lack of legitimate reasons and means to continue the fight. During the era of Amir Abdulrahman Khan, groups of Pashtun and Hazara insurgents gave up arms after making deals with the government or finding their activities unproductive.

The current Afghan anti government uprising has two major characteristics:

- a) The Taliban government was removed by the outside power and it caused a hostile insurgency.
- b) The Taliban led insurgency is being supported by outside powers.

PRAP Canada has presented a detailed study of the reasons and sources of insurgency in the Pashtun dominated areas presented by Jamal Khan – PRAP Canada Forum, Toronto CBC Centre, December 2006. Please read the PRAP report dated December 2006 before you proceed with this document.

Please obtain this document in PRAP Canada website at <http://www.prapcanada.com/cbcjamal.htm>

**The character of the current insurgency in Afghanistan and PRAP approaches:**

- a) The fact that they represent the legitimate government and that they were removed from power by the USA.

We can address this fact by adding that the Taliban were brought to power by the same USA and their local supporters.

The Taliban government did an exceptional job at the beginning to curb the drug trafficking, bringing some security and stopping the abuse and organized crime by the warlords. The Taliban were not able to continue making changes to the Afghan society due to their limited views and lack of agenda and strategy for Afghanistan. Lack of vision and programming for the country made them a good target for the international terrorist organizations and finally in late 1990s the movement fell into the hands of Al Qaeda. The Taliban did not win the popular votes of the citizens, nor did they establish any democratic institutions, like Parliament or lawmaker entities. They did not even have the popular votes of the religious scholars when they took power. The Taliban do not have the right to claim that they are the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan.

- b) The fact that Afghanistan has been invaded by many countries and the Taliban and their friends are calling for Holy war.

This fact could be legitimate if one country invaded Afghanistan and dictated their rules and orders throughout the puppet government.

Afghanistan has been in wars for over 30 years. Afghanistan was invaded by Russians in 1980 and there was a unilateral military action in order to replace the local government. The current situation is completely different than all previously marked ones. In 2002, Afghanistan was a failed state, where the

majority government structures failed due to the chaos caused by the Mujahedeen regimes and then by the Taliban. The country was deepened in the war economy, front line wars were initiated with fighting between warlords and Taliban fractions that took the lives of many thousands of Afghans in different regions. The international community could not tolerate a failed state that could potentially become a threat to the rest of the world. Today, many countries have their soldiers and their specialists in Afghanistan. Afghanistan cannot be invaded by Estonia or Croatia. Afghanistan cannot be invaded by Canada or Germany. Afghanistan stood against great powers such as Arabs, Persians, Russians and British. Many countries presently in Afghanistan have good intentions and they would like to see Afghanistan a progressive country and a valuable member of the international community.

- c) The fact that Afghanistan once again became the centre of international and regional games. The Taliban movement melted into the population after losing the power. A number of high ranking Taliban leaders with pragmatic views joined the reconstruction process, others stayed neutral for over a year. What happened after one year? In 2003 a number of interested parties in Pakistan energized the movement and provided logistics and a moral boost. Cross border movement has been activated and Taliban bases were established in Quetta and Waziristan. The new Pakistani policy was simple; get financial benefits from war on terror; keep the Afghan front alive so Pakistan will continue its hegemonic existence and further control of the tribal areas. Pakistan succeeded in its aims. They received multibillion dollar loans and their previous loans were waved. Pakistan was called a good friend in the war on terror and received the legitimacy of its military regime by the United States and other western countries. Other neighbors received encouragement over the Taliban re-activation and now Iran and Russia are also taking part in this new game. The new opposition to the United States is again using Pashtun people and territories as a tool to engage the old enemy in war. Pashtuns are again fighting while others are collecting the dividends of the “Holy war”.

Russian made weapon are sold to the Taliban through brokers in the North of the country. There is a reason for that. Interested parties inside Afghanistan believe that this war in the Pashtun dominated provinces should continue for their own economic and geopolitical interests.

PRAP believes that the outside factor in the Taliban war is for more significant than the inside Afghan factor. In fact Pashtuns are ready more than ever to change their lives and participate in the process of emerging into the world affairs and world economy. Our talks to Pashtun youth, young professionals and intellectuals are encouraging and are a signal for the progressive world.

There are ways to achieve the connection between the government, the international community and the progressive Pashtun population in Afghanistan.

- d) The fact that the reconstruction efforts in the Pashtun dominated area has not been significant and the Taliban and their supporters are using this as an example of failure.

The international community pledged its support for reconstruction and development all over Afghanistan. The insurgent activities are in fact slowing the reconstruction process in Afghanistan.

There is another reason why this process is slower in the south than in other parts of the country. The Taliban activities forced the international community and the Afghan government to focus on military operations. As a result many Pashtun intellectuals in the southern parts of the country are left behind in the process of empowerment of Afghan groups. Many Afghan intellectuals in the south of the country have not been engaged in the reconstruction process. A large number of NGOs have been brought to the area, either from abroad or from other provinces. If local intellectuals and anti Taliban Pashtuns are involved in the process of reconstruction, then the gap between the Taliban and the local population will widen. The contacts between the Taliban and their sponsors will discontinue.

In fact, many young pro reconstruction Pashtuns are traveling to Kabul to seek support in the Afghan government, but after meeting a thick layer of corrupt government officials, they are losing faith and returning to their provinces with

little or no hope. Many individuals who have fought the Taliban are not receiving proper support from the government. The government officers and the governor's circles are not inclusive enough. Any new governor is bringing his own guards and his own crew to fight the insurgency. A local movement to fight the terrorists and start the reconstruction efforts has not been encouraged and supported in full depth. We discovered a great potential of anti insurgency and anti extremist movement that should be supported locally. They are the young and educated Afghans that hold a chance of withstanding the pressures of the Taliban in the villages and towns.

We can solve the insurgency problem by accepting a multilateral approach in fighting the insurgency, empowering the local groups, and making deals with reasonable and moderate Taliban leaders (FED). The fighting component has been addressed but the two other components of the strategy have not been implemented in full strength.

Cutting the ties of the Taliban with their sponsors in Pakistan and Arab countries are better than fencing a line that goes through villages and lands of Pashtuns. This line should be going through the supply lines of Taliban, brain centres of their supporters and bank accounts of their sponsors. We would rather make an intelligent operation than an old style blocking of travel routes.

According to credible information, the Taliban and their sponsors have adopted a bi-monthly border crossing schedule. One year ago, the crossing was occurring on a bi-weekly basis. They have adjusted themselves to the new fencing conditions. Today, the Taliban do not have their commanders behind them. They are equipped with video cameras and sound equipment to tape any atrocities they are committing. These groups receive logistics, supplies and cash only if they present credible evidence of atrocities and violence with their participation.

We believe that necessary intelligence and local support in tribal areas as well as in the southern provinces will contribute to the extremists' isolation and therefore, to the violence reduction.

We believe that such resources exist in the south of the country and there is a need for government programs to attract local Pashtuns in the resistance, recovery and reconstruction (3R) movement. There is a silent support for the current Afghan government and namely for the president. The government has to widen its views and broaden its vision of inclusiveness.

## II. **T**he inside government and inside parliament opposition

Being an inside government opposition is a good sign of democracy. The opposition was initially supported and promoted to create a balance of power and a legitimate show of democracy. At least, it was the intention of the government and the international community to create players in democratic society.

What happened?

The warlord elite after taking over financial benefits from their Jihad became more confident in pursuing their political agendas particularly in the new democratic environment. The democratic opposition first was created with the defeat of Yunus Qanuni as a powerful presidential candidate. The defeated candidate received assurances that he will have a legitimate place in the current Afghan political scene. He was soon elevated to the post of the Afghanistan's Parliament speaker.

With the rise of insurgency in the country and the unprecedented corruption in the government ranks, the opposition is committed to the following.

- a) Destabilize the government and show them as a legitimate alternative to the power. There is also a hidden agenda of promoting federalism and parliamentary governance structure. Both options will serve the Warlord dominated opposition to strengthen their positions in the regions and also create a parliamentary regime that will be easily bought and sold within the walls of the parliament. It is easy enough to buy the majority of the 500 parliament seats than to convince 15 million voters.
- b) The opposition has made significant success in creating new alliances in their ranks. Any government minister who is fired or replaced could be a good candidate for the opposition recruitment. They went further and recruited the former pro Soviet ministers and leaders in exchange for the right of participation in the political scene

of Afghanistan. The opposition is also working hard to win the heart and mind of the western leaders and particularly, the USA. Their lobbyist groups in the face of second level diplomatic elite, trades people and art and culture elite are traveling around the world to strengthen their positions. The opposition has started working in the Pashtun dominated intellectual heartlands with promises of participation and inclusion in the political and economic process.

- c) The inside government opposition is using all government failures to gain the support of the population. They have established a media watch dog on government activities. They have attracted businesses, which represent their economic interests to participate in this war. We believe unless changes are made in the government positions and strategies, this war can be lost to the inside government opposition.

What can happen?

The opposition has virtually created a legitimate alternative for the Karzai government. They can potentially convince the west and in the next presidential elections their candidate (possibly a Pashtun candidate) will win the election. Then they are in the driver's seat. They will change the constitution and will promote federal system over a time period. They will deal with Pakistan over the disputed Durand line and will agree on their terms. They will eventually bring Russian economic interests and will play between Russians and Americans to get more benefits. They will oppress the Pashtun nation politically, economically and culturally and will continue keeping them in dark and in war.

In case of their win, a democratically elected regime will dictate the rules of the game. The west and particularly Americans will have to listen to two devils - the Pakistani establishment and the Afghani establishment.

### III. **T**he corruption and systemic problems in the government.

Every body knows that the Karzai government has been supported by the international community. But nobody recognizes the fact that in the current Afghan situation, this is the best setting Afghans can count on. Any other form of governance in Afghanistan is worse than what we have now.

The government structures are working to some degree due to the efforts of the international community and a number of NGOs operating across the country and particularly in Kabul and major provincial centres. Some urgent issues are being addressed. There is limited reconstruction in the country mostly with the private sector's initiatives and international community efforts. The reconstruction efforts are limited to short term activities and projects of urgent needs. There are no major projects of strategic importance for Afghanistan. In 2002 PRAP Chairman Yar Taraky made recommendations to the Canadian Government on the strategic needs for Afghanistan that will help the country in the long run.

Afghanistan needs more than 40,000Km roads and highways, more than 30 airports, a strong telecommunication system different than the current mobile system, a government database system, military education modernization, vigilant border security services, country-wide electrification, strong transportation and aviation, modern education in Kabul and provinces, elementary education in mother tongue and finally, a working government structure that will serve the people and the country.

This government created opposition to itself by electing unqualified ministers and deputy ministers and then firing them. After becoming well known, these ministers and deputy ministers join the opposition ranks. The government failed to create a system of response and leadership within its own ranks. Most leadership elite including ministries, government corporations and a number of NGO's are busy traveling and attending endless meetings for the sake of creating new possibilities for themselves. Very little is done in relation to the general public. The gap between the people and the government is widening.

There are individuals in the president's and ministers' circles who have cut off their contacts with the population. Most of the contacts and meetings have a private interest nature. There is no systemic approach about the policies and general procedures.

One of Afghanistan's biggest new challenges is the foreign workers contribution to Afghanistan. In the beginning of the post Taliban era, foreign individuals have been visiting Afghanistan for the purposes of helping the country recover from the chaos.

Today, a large number of foreign professionals visit Afghanistan for the reason of financial gain that is not possible in their home countries. In direct opposite, the foreign fighters on the Taliban side want to contribute their fortune to their religious cause, while foreigners on the government side receive contracts with no or limited fare tender, positions at the NGO management and even some government advisory jobs. This approach created some sort of resistance and antipathy towards foreigners in the big cities like Kabul, Herat, Mazare Sharif and Jalal Abad. This is a fairly new development in the Afghan relief scene. Two years ago, many Afghans were looking at foreign professionals as their mentors, while today Afghans blame them for stealing their jobs and opportunities. In some cases, foreigners run cultural and educational institutions with limited or no knowledge of Afghan society. The current situation forced foreign professionals to run a strict communication lifestyle with their Afghan workers. It built thick walls between them and the population. The salary range between Afghan professionals and the foreign individuals is not comparable. In general terms, we have to accept the free and open market for goods, labour and intellectual property. Afghanistan should create a base for a fair and inclusive business environment. One of the engineering companies complained that because they are an Afghan engineering firm, they are usually excluded from the tender or selection process.

With all the above, the current Afghan government is struggling on one hand, to fight the terrorism and from the other hand, be vigilant from inside defectors. In addition to its own entire systemic problem, an unprecedented corruption contributes to its unpopularity.

All what we can do is to disperse forces together and help this government self repair itself and stand against those threats. We believe that by bringing the right people and leaders to the scene and accepting a multilateral approach in its policies the government will succeed in its aims. We have to remember that all other alternatives in the current situation are worse than what we have right now in Afghanistan. This may



not be the best choice for Afghans, but it is a choice that can be refurbished and repaired.

PRAP Canada will continue to monitor the situation and bring fresh ideas and concepts for the interest of Afghanistan and for the interest of peace and stability in the region. PRAP believes in a strong and prosperous Afghanistan, where the Pashtun nation is free of extremist elements and is a thorough and strong contributor to the region's economy and social changes.