

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
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Afghanistan in 2014 and beyond:
The domestic, regional and international dynamics

Afghanistan faces an arduous transition subject to myriad variables. Fluidity and flux has remained constant in Afghanistan's political history and stays mirrored in its contemporary reality as uncertainties of an international troop withdrawal and apprehensions of internal power struggle loom large. Located at the interface of three distinct regions - Central Asia, West Asia and South Asia, traditionally, the country has served as a buffer state for major powers and its current borders which were drawn in the late 19th century with the declared aim of preventing conflict, arguably, still remains the site of proxy wars or political competition for other states. Fixated on Afghanistan's looming challenges, often a bleak picture of the embattled country's future is being drawn in the international media and academia which anticipate that the volatility of Afghanistan would lead to regional instability and colossal security challenges. And that regional order which is yet to emerge is a pressing need in order to avoid intensified regional rivalry. However, the narrative of despair is supplemented by a narrative of opportunity where proposals envisioning Afghanistan's role as a fulcrum for trade and cooperation are being drawn up on the basis of an argument that hegemonic prescriptions do not sustain themselves. Nation-building, it is said, could proceed on the basis of economic development, social harmony, rule of law and participatory democracy in consonance with the "wishes of the Afghan people".

Contemporary Afghanistan remains a complex milieu characterised by powerful and competing agendas. Variables are fast evolving and altering. For instance, the USA which is due to pull most combat troops out of Afghanistan may keep armed presence in the form of armed unmanned aerial vehicles operated by the US, according to latest Pentagon reports, depending on what agreement for continuing operations is reached between the US and Afghanistan. The capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is also another variable which is disputed. The Transition Co-ordination Commission of Afghanistan responsible for the transfer of security from the coalition forces to the Afghan National Army, however, claims that the ANSF already has shown its capabilities in terms of assuming those responsibilities and that insurgency is in control. Meanwhile Afghanistan's High Peace Council's "Peace process roadmap to 2015" released in November 2012 has generated criticism for giving immense space to Pakistan to regain indirect hegemony over its neighbour and dubiously set to take it back to pre- 9/11

conditions. India, an active player in Afghanistan has legitimate concerns about the kind of role it is to play under such circumstances. The post-2014 situation and the possibility of an international withdrawal necessitates, sharing concerns, evaluating the contingencies and preparing beyond. The aim of the symposium would be to provide a dispassionate assessment of the country's future on the following themes:

- Internal political dynamics and power-struggle in Afghanistan
- Criticalities of Security transition in Afghanistan
- Reconciliation between the other ethnic groups and the Taliban
- Possibilities of an "Afghan-owned" and "Afghan-led" process
- Regional Security and the role of the regional countries
- Global response to the Afghan issue
- India's workable response