**An unending quagmire**

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On August 15, 2021, Afghanistan apparently added the US to its list of failed conflicts. Unfortunately, humanity suffered and is still in the clutches of the same quagmire. Common Afghan masses are suffering due to a power contestation for over four decades. The public has no interest in a power struggle, they have no fault other than living in this region, and the majority are innocent and do not know about what is still to come.

The global power contest is at its peak. Presently the world is in transition, shedding unipolarity and jumping towards bipolarity with the pendulum fast swinging towards China. Thus, in the given power contestation, Afghanistan in particular and this region at large still remains a vital battleground. Have the withdrawing forces retracted their objectives and designs? The answer is a big ‘no’.

During the 20-year-long escapade, the occupation forces kept changing goal posts and prolonged their stay in the region. Exploiting fault-lines through multi-dimensional prongs will now be the order of the day. Even after five months of Taliban control in Kabul, stability in all of Afghanistan is still viewed as a pipedream.

[Karachi police arrest three street criminals after alleged encounter](https://nation.com.pk/20-Jan-2022/karachi-police-arrest-three-street-criminals-after-alleged-encounter)

The spillover effect from next door has already consumed over 80,000 lives and caused a direct loss of over $160 billion to Pakistan’s economy. Any further instability in Afghanistan would have devastating spillover effects on Pakistan. Our masses need respite. Given the economic strangulation, Pakistan cannot afford any more instability next door.

Our masses especially, the youth also dream of prosperity and stability. Others in the region and the neighbourhood would suffer the same though at lesser intensity. The Central Asian Republics (CARs) also need revenue generation through exporting their multi-faceted stockpiles for development.

How to go about this then? A deeper analysis hints for a regional approach for addressing the challenge at hand. This approach demands realisation in respective ruling elites and deep states that their masses need respite, human development and prosperity.

Individual states will no longer be able to prosper, rather the region would grow collectively. No country can solve the Afghan mess on its own due to capacity issues and anticipated tremors from world powers. All six neighbouring states and Russia need to join in for sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

[Karachi reports 41pc coronavirus positivity ratio](https://nation.com.pk/20-Jan-2022/karachi-reports-41pc-coronavirus-positivity-ratio)

China must lead the way through. All must pledge not to allow each other’s soil to be used against anyone and no more meddling in the affairs of others. Neighbouring states including Russia must have a joint body to evaluate the entire mess and make solutions along with a manifestation strategy.

All must facilitate and contribute to infrastructural and institutional building/development. All must respect the Afghans’ faith, culture, values and system. They must not be made victims of yet another cultural and system imperialism. At the same time, Afghanistan must realise that it cannot remain at a tangent to world obligations/responsibilities.

They need to dig deep and plug the loopholes within. They must realise that others will not always come to rescue them. The whole path of the regional approach is tough and rugged but holds more chances to succeed in the given environment.