**Regional response to restructuring**

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Apart from Pakistan, the bordering countries of Afghanistan—Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Russia and China have a long history of connectivity and interest in Afghanistan. During the 1990s, the turmoil with the founding of the Taliban government created a tense competition between otherwise friendly neighbours, Pakistan and Iran, in particular. Pakistan wholeheartedly supported the Pashtun Taliban, while Iran preferred the Northern Alliance, comprising Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara and Turkman minorities, whom the rigid government in Kabul refused to accommodate. The Central Asian neighbours of Afghanistan were equally opposed to the Taliban domination. This ill-founded approach not only isolated Pakistan but also brought upon itself a catastrophe, of untold proportions, in the form of a spate of terror attacks, after the Taliban government fell in 2001, due to US occupation. Pakistan’s links with Iran were weakened along with that of the Central Asian group of countries.

[Intizar murder case: ATC gives death sentence to 2 cops for planned killing](https://nation.com.pk/25-Oct-2021/intizar-murder-case-atc-gives-death-sentence-to-2-cops-for-planned-killing)

Learning a bitter lesson from its past, when President Joe Biden announced that 2,500 US troops would leave Afghanistan by August 31, Pakistan quickly made efforts to find a regional solution for post-US Afghanistan. At that moment it was feared that a vicious civil war might break out, thus destabilising not only Afghanistan but its neighbourhood, as well. In other words, there was a strong feeling of uncertainty which pushed the regional actors to make efforts so that the Afghan society can sustain itself. The region established a consensus that the bloodshed as a result of a civil war should be avoided. It was also realised that any vacuum created as a result of the upheaval, terror setups like Al Qaeda and Daesh-Khorasan might not take hold, spreading activities in Afghanistan and the neighbourhood, thus threatening the security of the respective societies. This apprehension proved accurate when in recent weeks, a number of suicide attacks took place on the mosques of Shia Muslims, in the south-eastern city of Khost and Kandahar, the stronghold of the Taliban. Both these locations are not far from the Pakistan border. The security of regional countries lies with the stability in Afghanistan. This time, all regional countries agree that no terrorist group should be provided the space to threaten regional and international peace. For that, impoverished Afghanistan, with a large majority of its people living below the poverty line, with meagre health facilities was to be helped. There is also consensus among the neighbours of Afghanistan that the Taliban must establish an inclusive government where the minority ethnic and sectarian groups are given an appropriate representation.

[Govt will fulfil commitments made with TLP: Sheikh Rasheed](https://nation.com.pk/25-Oct-2021/govt-will-fulfil-commitments-made-with-tlp-sheikh-rasheed)

Strengthening the narrative of a collective regional response on Afghanistan, in recent weeks, a series of meetings took place between the officials of the neighbours of Afghanistan, along with Russia, which does not have a common border with Afghanistan, but occupies a vital position, when it comes to current events. A series of contacts were established at various levels among regional nations, and the Taliban even before the American pullout. For example, a high-level Taliban delegation of nine visited China in July and met Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The delegation was informed that it was expected of them to strive for peace and reconstruction and that the East Turkestan Islamic Movement should be neutralised as it was a “direct threat to China’s national security”. In the same month, the delegation visited Moscow to assure the Russian government that they would not pose any security threat to their country nor their allies in Central Asia.

After the takeover of the Taliban, Pakistan took the initiative by hosting a meeting of the intelligence chiefs of Russia, China, Iran, and some Central Asian countries. The purpose was to coordinate security-related policies towards Afghanistan. This gesture dispelled past fears when Pakistan took unilateral measures and chose the Taliban as its favourite. In this regard, Prime Minister Imran Khan reiterated that his government is committed to the inclusive government in Kabul. There has to be a regional response. On the sidelines, the Iranian military delegation led by General Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of General Staff of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Armed Forces visited Pakistan on a highly productive three-day visit. The Iranian guests were assured that there would be a coordinated regional policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan is in no hurry to recognise the Kabul regime. In a regional conference hosted by the Russians on October 20, the invited Taliban delegation vouched that “Afghanistan will never allow its soil to be used as a base for anyone to threaten the security of another country,” and that “isolating Afghanistan is in no one’s interests.” It was agreed in the Moscow summit that the UN donor conference be called for the development of the country so that stability can be achieved.

[T20 World Cup: Afghanistan defeats Scotland by 130 runs](https://nation.com.pk/25-Oct-2021/t20-world-cup-afghanistan-defeats-scotland-by-130-runs)

The fears are not just apprehensions but are based on solid evidence from the past Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001. Apart from this, the Taliban should have realised by now that they cannot exist and rule unless they get financial assistance and legitimacy, especially from their neighbours. For this, they primarily need to implement the required measures. It cannot be ignored that only prosperous and stable Afghanistan is essential for regional security and international peace.