



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies
Islamabad**

2019: The Year that was for Afghanistan

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Published on 2nd January 2020

In the Afghan context the year 2019 will be remembered as the year of the Taliban. From an incapacitated, crippled, hunted, leaderless, demoralized and a vanquished force, it has survived. It is beguiling that it managed to re-coop, re-establish, recover from all its miseries and hardship to a position of unmitigated strength and authority. Seldom has modern history witnessed such examples of resilience or a re-emergence of a defeated movement spread over two decades. One Talib defiantly remarked in

December 2001 after the fall of Kandahar 'one day the US will send in its troops to hold ground, we will be there, either above it or under it' .

Of all years, 2019 will stand out as a watershed year. No place was safe, no garrison, no camp, no city, no sect , no government either Provincial or Central , no politician , just no one. It was this atmosphere of perpetual fear of insecurity that the Taliban understood and mastered the methodology of using it to their advantage. Whether through old tribal links, blackmail, cajoling, fake news, bribery or pure brutality, they achieved unbelievable successes. Have they mastered 5th Generation Warfare?? The cost in terms of loss of lives cannot be measured. The poor common Afghan again bore the brunt of the Taliban wrath. The country has faced such a waste of innocent lives, such massive internal dislocation , such as poverty over the years , that one can only wonder how this nation has survived. The Afghans themselves be blamed for some like lack of resistance , selfish motives, uncompromising, unforgiving in addressing each other's concerns . No there were other spoilers and 'stakeholders' that could not see a compromise, a peace in Afghanistan benefiting them. What exactly has been the US and later the Indian strategy. Much has been written, much analysed. Perceptions created. Who gained and who lost is all too visible. However why 2019? Specifically major events took place that will have a major impact on the following years.

The Taliban emerged as a political power centre with the US finally negotiating , as an equal. The Taliban/ US talks have sputtered onto a final lap. Much to the horror of Ashraf Ghani . While there will be separate treaties to be signed with Kabul and

guarantors, the deal between both the US and the Taliban will be of utmost importance. It will be agreed to and signed. Its implication means that the US is not concerned about any intra Afghan dialogue , whether it succeeds or not, is an Afghan internal matter. Democracy can take a back seat. The Taliban know this. They will take full advantage of the US silence henceforth.

The emergence and the subduing of the Daish in parts of Afghanistan, all in a year, is bewildering. While it's leader supposedly has been eliminated, it's elements are still scattered. How and why questions will continue to haunt.

Muscling in an economically strong China in the region was witnessed. Being patient and astute, China has understood that to tackle The US is through economics and not military confrontation. It had made inroads into Afghanistan that will see results in the coming years.

The Supremacy of the sole superpower this year, is tottering and diminishing. To live with the reality that a ragtag slipper wearing , shawl draped, turban clad rabble, armed with AK 47' s which has this preposterous belief in itself and its Religion, of a world-beater that too of the Combined might of The US and NATO!! And to be forced to sit across the table to negotiate for an exit! Bad dreams are made of this.

It had been ordained by a Power greater than any in this world that mankind will be governed by Four distinct boundaries. Balance, Polarity, Evolution and Time. This is visible in His creation of the Universe. How can we deny His bounties! Surah Shams and Surah Rahman . Disturbing any single one will lead to chaotic events. The US has to

understand these four boundaries, the impact of massive migration to the West, polarised societies, hate within religious beliefs, immunity to the suffering of others, selfishness and disregarding Time and Space is evident everywhere .

Afghanistan will face greater turmoil, this can only be avoided if one can temper the anger and revengeful emotions of the Taliban. They cannot forget a slight. Long ago I heard an Afghan phrase that has stuck permanently, 'Qahr Afghan, Rehm Uzbek' , where the ruthlessness and the brutality of a Afghan end, from there starts the Rehm of an Uzbek. A decrease in violence is not foreseen.

Pakistan has done well to restrict entry of free flowing Afghans throughout our country. The Border Fence is achieving its aim. The TPP is hurt but not enough, it's safe havens in Paktia and elsewhere will remain a threat. The fresh combination of Ashraf Ghani and Amrullah Saleh must be dealt with firmly. Amrullah Saleh has hatred and vengeance written all over him.

CPEC has to succeed and with it the Gawader Port. Baluchistan is our great vulnerability, Afghans, Indians and the Iranian know it. The Government has wisely established a generally secure environment in most of Baluchistan. Must be sustained. Afghanistan will continue to fester, we must manage to restrict the overflow away from our soil. Working on the Taliban and other ethnicities to show compassion and adjusting to changing environments must remain our main thrust, whenever Pakistan talks to them. Eventually, Pakistan will be forced to take a lead role when the Exit deal is signed. The

US will demand Taliban adherence through Islamabad. A difficult task, one which we must not take any responsibility.

