

Contemporary Issues - 3

IR/India World

⑮ Afghanistan after NATO withdrawal

United States has announced to completely pull out its forces from Afghanistan till the end of 2014 and has started delegating control of parts of the war-torn country to Afghan authorities.

As a part of transferring power to the Afghan government, US forces have handed over charge of Bagram prison to Afghan troops. However, parts of the prison, where notorious militants are kept are still in the control of the foreign troops. Likewise, US forces also transferred control of the restive Nirk district of the Wardak province to Afghan forces

Taliban opened their office in Qatar for holding talks with representatives of Karzai-led government and US, however, later the office was closed. Such steps clearly indicated the seriousness of US handing over power to Afghan government.

But the US also has plans to keep about 10,000 troops in the war-battered Afghanistan after 2014. NATO allies are expected to provide around 5,000 troops if the security-related agreement is agreed to among the stakeholders in Afghanistan, US and NATO.

Brief history

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks on twin towers in USA, the then US president, George W. Bush waged a war in Afghanistan with an aim to eliminate Bin Laden (the said mastermind behind 9/11) and the Al-Qaida terrorist network; two, to remove the Taliban from power and to prevent Afghanistan from continuing to serve as a safe-haven for terrorists; and three, to bring stability to Afghanistan and its people through the creation of a functioning stable and democratic state.

With the establishment of the Afghan Interim Authority as a temporary local authority in the Bonn Agreement in December 2001, the issue of state-building was added to this agenda. And indeed, after NATO took permanent command of the ISAF force in October 2003 and its mandate was expanded territorially to reach across most of Afghanistan, ISAF's goals were further expanded to cover the maintenance of security, the aiding of reconstruction and development and the facilitation of governance.

Implications of withdrawal of troops

There could be many challenges to Afghanistan after 2014, some are discussed below:

(a) Regional Security:

It is assumed that after reduction/withdrawal of the coalition forces from Afghanistan, the militants would be re-organized/restructured and could threaten the peace of the entire region by drawing the neighbouring countries in the war. Thus the reduction/withdrawal can endanger stability of the south and central Asia.

History reveals that after complete withdrawal of Soviet Union forces from Afghanistan in 1988, America ceased taking interest in Afghanistan and the fighters made their way to Paki-

stan-India eastern borders. If the terror activities persist in Afghanistan after 2014, they are likely to spill over into neighbouring countries, and Afghanistan could become "a staging ground for an Indo-Pakistani proxy war.

(b) Afghan Forces:

The key question is: Will the Afghan forces be able to discharge their responsibility effectively? NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan can provide a golden chance to Taliban to challenge the Afghan National Security Force(ANSF) potential to keep the country intact. The ANSF will simultaneously combat on two fronts. Firstly, it will fight against Taliban, which will use all their strength to re-take areas from army in the remotest rural territories. Secondly, the Taliban will strive to eliminate the country's internal security and political apparatus - the police, government and the army by demoralizing and deserting the security forces.

(c) Economy:

Afghanistan's economy is totally dependent on foreign aid that has been cut down to a great extent. Some foreign funded media outlets, including TV and Radio channels have shut down or limited their services. In case of instability, foreign investors can cease their projects in Afghanistan that will be a great blow to its economy.

After 2014, the dependent Afghanistan would need to stand on its own feet, which would be something very difficult for this war torn country. Afghans who are drawing salaries in dollars and Euros now will plunge into severe despair when dollars are stopped. Afghanistan will need a minimum of 3-4 billion dollar apart from security fund to maintain the functioning of the government.

Afghanistan spent very little amount of the foreign funds on its industrial sector. Afghanistan imports are larger than its exports, the biggest export of Afghanistan are dry fruit. Rampant smuggling and corruption have almost ditched Afghanistan's economy, there is no proper check and balance system in this regard and there is a fear that after 2014, a weak economy will be one of the biggest challenges to Afghanistan.

(d) Political uncertainty

Currently Afghanistan has a very weak government. Karzai government has no or very weak control beyond Kabul. The presidential elections are very important because Afghanistan needs a strong leader to implement not only the writ of the government, but also bridge the gap among the conflicting ethnic groups.

(e) Pakistan Interference

After 2014, Pakistan interference can mount in Afghanistan. The stability of Afghanistan is closely intertwined with developments in neighboring Pakistan. Islamabad has assisted the Taliban in the past and once again stands accused by the United States of supporting the Taliban groups fighting ISAF forces in Afghanistan.

Some researchers argue that the Pakistan military actively aids the insurgents through funding, the provision of weapons, strategic planning, and so on, as well as through its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency

(f) Illegal drug trafficking

Illicit drugs is one of the major post-2014 problems that must be urgently addressed. Afghanistan remains by far the leading cultivator and producer of opium in the world. Poppy cultivation and illicit trafficking of opiates threaten the health and well-being of people in the region and beyond. They fuel crime and corruption, undermine stability and can be used to finance terrorist activity.

Options for India

Afghanistan is a very important nation for India because of following reasons:

First, India is invested in the success of the current regime. It has already committed around US\$2 billion in developmental aid to Afghanistan, making India one of the country's biggest donors. In 2011, the two countries signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement, in which India agreed to assist in the training and equipping of Afghan security forces, forces that will eventually take on the Taliban without the support of Western troops.

Second, Afghanistan is important for India's energy security. India has vital economic interests in Afghanistan in terms of natural resources, i.e. iron, copper, cobalt, gold and critical industrial metals like lithium. Reserves of these natural resources are estimated to be worth US \$ 1 trillion. Afghanistan is also endowed with natural gas and oil. As most of the country is unexplored due to war and conflict, prospects for additional natural resources reserves cannot be denied. Natural resources are very significant for economic development of Afghanistan that primarily relies on international development assistance. For instance, lithium is crucial for green energy products. It is used in mobile phone and laptop batteries as well as electric car batteries. As the threat of climate change looms large and there is emphasis on developing clean energy technologies, importance of lithium is bound to increase.

Thirdly, Afghanistan is vital for the revival of the silk route that can be a gateway for India to Central Asia for trade and energy resources. In return, transit routes will generate substantial revenue for Afghanistan. For example, TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) pipeline project is estimated to add around US \$ 5 million annually in transit fee to the Afghan coffers. 735 kilometers of this gas pipeline will pass through Afghanistan and the entire project could be jeopardized, if the security scenario in Afghanistan does not improve. The NATO's withdrawal has created a sense of uncertainty in Afghanistan and regional countries are anxious about the country's future.

Fourthly, a stable Afghanistan is important to India's security. Several Indian citizens have been killed on duty in Afghanistan, and the Indian embassy in the Afghan capital has had to withstand two attacks, in 2008 and 2009, that brought many casualties. Before the current war Afghanistan posed a significant danger to India. It was during Taliban rule in 1999, for example, that an Indian Airlines aircraft was hijacked to Kandahar in Afghanistan. India had to release three terrorists in exchange for the hostages.

So the options for India to maintain a closer link with new Afghanistan are:

- India can expand its role in training Afghan national security forces (particularly the police and officer corps of the army) and helping develop the justice sector. As the process of reintegration gains momentum, India's experience of building a counter insurgency grid in Jammu & Kashmir and reintegrating the militants could have some important parallels and lessons for security sector reform in Afghanistan.
- India's experience of the parliamentary system, political parties, electoral processes, space for opposition, federal system could have important lessons for political sector reform. The past presidential and parliamentary elections in Afghanistan and the present political impasse have brought to the fore the problems of a highly centralised presidential system.
- While India has indicated support for the Afghan led reintegration and reconciliation process, adherence to the red lines laid down at the London Conference including respect for the Afghan constitution, human and women rights would be crucial to prevent subversion from within. Afghanistan's attempts at reconciliation needs to be supported by larger political and constitutional reforms which would necessitate provisions for dialogue, autonomy and special representation of minorities, women and marginalised groups.

- While India has worked towards shoring up the Afghan government's capacity for aid delivery, improving aid effectiveness would remain a critical goal. Towards this end, the participation of local civilians in identifying and prioritising aid projects would remain crucial. One of the success stories of Afghanistan is the National Solidarity Programme that needs greater funding and support.
- In the economic realm, there is an immediate need for developing of alternate livelihood programmes as well as reviving Afghanistan's traditional artisan and agricultural base. Saffron cultivation in poppy growing areas could be a useful alternate livelihood project. Natural resource exploitation, thermal power generation and industrial development in the relatively stable north and west could provide opportunities for employment for the youth. Moreover, it would help Afghanistan to graduate from being an externally dependent 'rentier state' to a self sustaining economy. Indian business companies could be encouraged to invest in the natural resource sector in the relatively stable north and west.
- There is also an urgent need to establish industries to spur economic independence and generate employment, which would actively engage the youth of the country. Afghanistan, due to its very low tax regime, is swamped by foreign goods mainly from Pakistan, China and Iran. This inhibits the growth of an indigenous industrial base. India could contribute to establishing small-scale industries like a carpet industry along with ornaments and handicrafts to help artisans, weavers and craftsmen. Follow up studies on these projects, assessing their usefulness and links with the development strategy of the Afghan government, would be extremely critical.
- India has actively provided assistance to women's groups either through self employment schemes, health and capacity building not only in Kabul but also in the western province of Herat. Being long term stake holders in the rebuilding of the social and economic fabric of the war ravaged society, this mode of aid delivery can proved to be effective in sustaining and even expanding such programmes.

As developments in Afghanistan will directly impinge on India's security, and the search for the 'end game' quickens, New Delhi will have to strengthen its position as a serious stakeholder in the long term stabilisation of Afghanistan and as a partner in the nation building process.

①9 Syrian Crisis

Syria is clearly in a state of internal crisis. Syrians have been facing with similar repressive conditions as those that led other Arab nations to revolutions and uprisings known as the Arab Spring in 2011 but the face of the crisis has changed tremendously.

Reason for the uprising

1. Political repression

President Bashar al-Assad assumed power in 2000 after the death of his father Hafez who had ruled Syria since 1970. Assad quickly dashed hopes of reform, as power remained concentrated in the ruling family, and the one-party system left few channels for political dissent. With no peaceful transfer of power since the 1950s, popular uprising was inevitable.

2. Discredited ideology

Syrian Baath party is regarded as the founder of "Arab socialism", an ideological current that merged state-led economy with Pan-Arab nationalism. However, by 2000 the Baathist ideology was reduced to an empty shell, discredited by lost wars with Israel and a crippled economy.

Upon taking power, Assad tried to modernize the regime invoking the Chinese model of economic reform, but failed to bring result.

3. Uneven economy

Cautious reform of the remnants of socialism opened the door to private investment, triggering an explosion of consumerism among the urban upper-middle classes. However, privatization has favoured families with personal links to Assad, but seeded anger among common man as living costs soared and jobs remained scarce.

4. Drought

To make matters worse, a persistent drought has devastated farming communities in north-eastern Syria, affecting more than a million people since 2008. Tens of thousands of impoverished farmer families flocked into rapidly expanding urban slums, their anger at the lack of government help fueled by the new ostentatious wealth of the nouveau riche.

5. New media

Although the state media is tightly controlled, the proliferation of satellite TV, mobile phones and the internet after 2000 meant that any government attempt to insulate the youth from the outside world was doomed to fail. The use of the new media is critical to the activist networks that underpin the uprising in Syria.

6. Corruption

The system is corrupt. Even for daily activities huge amount of bribes are transited.

7. State violence

Syria's vast intelligence services, the infamous mukhabarat, penetrate all spheres of society. The fear of the state is one of the reasons why so many Syrians simply take the regime as a fact of life. But the outrage over the brutal response of the security forces to the outbreak of peaceful protest in Spring 2011, documented on social media, helped generate the snowball effect as thousands across Syria joined the uprising. More funerals, more protest.

8. Minority rule

Syria is a majority Sunni Muslim country but the top positions in the security apparatus are in the hands of the Alawis, a Shiite religious minority to which the Assad family belongs. Most Syrians pride themselves on their tradition of religious tolerance, but many Sunnis still resent the fact that so much power is monopolized by a handful of Alawi families. While not a driving force of the Syrian uprising, the combination of a majority Sunni protest movement and an Alawi-dominated military has added to the tension in religiously mixed areas, such as the city of Homs.

Actors in the Conflict

• The Regime

The Assad regime's forces are estimated to number between 100.000 and 200.000. They dispose of heavy military weapons including tanks, fight helicopters, armoured personnel carriers and artillery. Due to this professional military technology, the regime forces have an advantage in the direct military confrontations with the demonstrators. A vast majority of the Alawite community is loyal to the regime for several reasons. High-ranking military posts are held by Alawites, therefore they strongly identify themselves with the regime and they also fear revenge by the Sunni majority in a case of regime's fall. Also Demographically, wealthier urban areas tend to support Assad more than the countryside.

- **The opposition**

The Syrian opposition is considered to be divided. Some parts of the opposition groups are considered to be connected to small communities. Currently, there are two main opposition coalitions in Syria.

(a) The Syrian National Council (SNC)

The SNC was formally created in Turkey in October 2011 by a range of mostly exile activists. It includes many members of the Muslim Brotherhood movement and it is dominated by the Sunni community. The SNC serves as a contact point for the international community, but it struggles with the internal disunity and a lack of efficiency. It advocates for an international military intervention, which leads some Syrians in the country to suspect the SNC as a tool of the foreign regional powers. On the other hand, some protest groups have put aside their differences and respect the SNC.

(b) National Coordination Body for Democratic Change (NCB)

The NCB is sometimes referred to as The National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change (NCC). It is based on an opposition bloc inside Syria and includes many long-term dissidents, who are allegedly afraid of Islamists within the SNC. Unlike SNC, the NCB is willing to negotiate with Assad's regime, opposes foreign military intervention and communicates with Russia.

Opposition forces are formidable but lack unity of purpose, unity of command, and unified international support. Various opposition groups have, depending on the circumstances, cooperated and competed for influence and control. At present, significant elements of the opposition are engaged in outright conflict against one another. Some observers suggest that more than 75% of the armed opposition may seek to replace the Assad government with a state ruled according to some form of Sunni Islamic law. Kurdish opposition groups control large areas of northeastern Syria and may seek autonomy or independence in the future.

- **Free Syrian Army (FSA)**

Thousands of Sunni soldiers have deserted the army since the uprising began (up to 60.000 by March 2012, according to the Turkish government data). These soldiers are mostly light-armed and trained on elementary level, as the core of the regime's high-ranking and well-trained military officials are from the Alawite religious group. Some of those deserters create the core of the FSA, which resorted to arms in its fight against the current regime. Although its leader Riyad al-Asaad (not related to the president) claims he's got around 40.000 men directly under his command, it is likely that the number is not even a half of this figure (valid estimates are not available). The FSA and the SNC cooperate together on some issues. In addition, there are also thousands of armed opposition fighters not directly associated with the FSA. Efficiency of the armed opposition increases in time partly thanks to the foreign support. Some of the armed protesters allegedly receive salaries, part of which comes likely from abroad (especially from Qatar and Saudi Arabi). This was strongly criticised by the regime as a foreign interference.

Timeline of the events

The revolt in lieu of Arab Spring started February 2011, but by mid-March, a faceless opposition had emerged from the flashpoint city of Daraa in Syria's largely conservative Sunni southwest. From Daraa, demonstrations spread to the Kurdish northeast, the coastal Latakia area, urban Sunni strongholds in Hama and Homs, and to Aleppo and the suburbs of Damascus. Feeling overwhelmed, Bashar al-Assad introduced some measures to satisfy the protesters. He formally lifted the widely-criticised State of Emergency in April 2011. The State of Emergency

previously suspended most constitutional protection of citizens and was in place from 1963, commonly used to suppress the dissent. Nevertheless, the regime was criticised for introducing only formal gestures to silence the protesters. Furthermore, Bashar called for a national referendum, which was held in February 2012, to introduce a new constitution through which the space would be open for the political competition outside the Baath party. It was approved by a vast majority of participants, however, it lacked the legitimacy due to the low turnout and ongoing deadly clashes between the regime forces and demonstrators. A majority of the opposition boycotted the election. Promises of limited political reforms did not satisfy the protesters, as most of them saw the only solution to the current crisis in an immediate end of the Assad's regime.

Later clashes between the Free Syrian Army and security forces in Homs escalated as the siege continued. After six days of bombardment, the Syrian Army stormed the city on 8 November, leading to heavy street fighting in several neighborhoods.

November and December 2011 saw increasing rebel attacks, as opposition forces grew in number. In the two months, the FSA launched deadly attacks on an air force intelligence complex in the Damascus suburb of Harasta, the Ba'ath Syrian Regional Branch youth headquarters in Idlib Governorate, Syrian Regional Branch offices in Damascus, an airbase in Homs Governorate, and an intelligence building in Idlib. In January 2012, Assad began using large-scale artillery operations against the insurgency, which led to the destruction of many civilian homes due to indiscriminate shelling. In February 2012, the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to approve a resolution condemning President Assad's unbridled crackdown on the uprising, but China and Russia, Syria's traditional patron, blocked all efforts for stronger Security Council action.

Tensions have also spilled over borders into Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Jordan, and fears have increased with evidence that Al Qaeda was behind a rise in suicide bombings in 2012.

Syria and India

The likely impact of the crisis is on oil supply, which will have massive impact on its economy at a time of rupee free fall and pessimism about growth. Though Syria is not a major oil producer, its strategic location overlooking Suez-Mediterranean supply routes could have destabilizing consequences for other oil exporting countries of the region and eventually lead to steep rise in international crude oil prices.

India has every reason to be concerned because its vital interests in the region not only encompass the safety and security of an approximately five million strong diaspora but also the fact that, this region alone meets two thirds of its crude oil demands. Of late, this region has become a destination for Indian investment and joint ventures. Some of the regional powers like the UAE, Saudi Arabia have now become top trading partner of India.

Indo-Syrian relations lack warmth except the fact that Syria has been supportive of India's stand on Kashmir and aspirations for a permanent seat at U.N. Security Council. India has been looked upon as a possible player to defuse the tension in West Asia by Syria along with other stakeholders like Russia and Iran. India's balanced stand during NAM Summit at Tehran was highly appreciated across board. At the U.N., especially during its stint as a non-permanent member, it had initially opposed tough sanctions against Syria. But later, it joined the chorus in condemning Syria for its human rights violations. In the recently concluded G-20 Summit at St. Petersburg, India reminded others about the wrongs done during the Iraq War, which needs to be avoided in case of Syria. India has appealed supporters of military action to wait till the U.N.-led investigation concludes its findings on use of chemical weapons. If Syria is found guilty, then any action should have the mandate of UNSC rather than a unilateral intervention as contem-

plated by the U.S along with its European allies like U.K. and France.

In view of the snowballing crisis in the region, price of per barrel of oil has reached a six month high and is now being traded around \$120 a barrel. In the days to come, it may skyrocket if appropriate measures are not taken by OPEC. India is a net importer of 78 percent of its oil needs, and it pays its oil bills in U.S. dollars, which constitute around 32 percent of the total import bill. Any further increase in oil prices will drain its dollar reserves and further weaken the rupee, thereby having a cascading effect on the whole economy.

②0 Russia Ukraine Crisis

Ukraine, comparable in size and population to France, has a very important geostrategic significance. It occupies the sensitive position between Russia and NATO member states Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania.

From the mid-1990s until 2004, Ukraine's political scene was dominated by President Leonid Kuchma and oligarchic "clans" (groups of powerful politicians and businessmen, mainly based in eastern and southern Ukraine) that supported him. His rule was characterized by fitful economic reform, widespread corruption, and a deteriorating human rights record. For Ukraine's 2004 presidential elections, the oligarchs chose Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych as their candidate to succeed Kuchma.

Yanukovych's government was criticized over its human rights record and massive high-level corruption, in part committed by Yanukovych's own family and associates. U.S. and EU officials expressed strong concern over the government's targeting of opposition leaders for selective prosecution.

Further Ukraine faces a gloomy economic picture since 2009. The global financial crisis and collapse of commodity prices are having a significant impact. Ukraine's industrial output fell by 19.8 percent in October 2008 compared to October 2007. The domestic economy deteriorated sharply with declining industrial production and exports, rising unemployment, falling incomes, and the crisis in the banking sector as financing seized up and the hryvnia tumbled. Private consumption fell sharply as did investment and this reinforced the economic downturn. The rapid decline in domestic activity obviously had a significant impact both on the rate of inflation and on the current account deficit.

After the crisis the European Union and Ukraine have initialed an Association Agreement as part of a joint effort to further strengthen the ties and bonds between them. The key parts focus on support to core reforms, economic recovery and growth, and governance and sector cooperation in areas such as energy, transport and environment protection, industrial cooperation, social development and protection, equal rights, consumer protection, education, youth, and cultural cooperation. The Agreement also puts a strong emphasis on values and principles: democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance, a market economy and sustainable development.

However, in November 2013, the government made a last-minute decision to not sign an Association Agreement with the European Union, due to Russian pressure.

Many Ukrainians were outraged. They took to the streets, demanding that Yanukovych sign the EU deal. Their numbers swelled. On November 30, Ukrainian special police attacked and viciously beat peaceful protestors (many of them young people) in Kyiv's central Maidan Nezalezhnosti, or Independence Square. The action outraged many Ukrainians, and resulted in

a massive upsurge in participation in the protests in Kyiv.

Smaller protests occurred in other Ukrainian cities, mainly in opposition strongholds in western and central Ukraine.

Over 100 persons, mostly protestors but also some police officers, were killed. Many hundreds more were injured. Many casualties were caused by firearms, mainly used by the police, including by snipers.

The death toll may have caused support in the Ukrainian parliament for the crackdown and the regime to collapse. On February 20, it approved a resolution calling for the pullout of the Interior Ministry and military forces from Kyiv to their bases and a ban on the use of firearms. Of the 450-member body, 239 were present for the vote; 236 voted for the resolution. Once the police and military complied with the resolution, groups of protestors seized key government buildings. Yanukoyvch and scores of his supporters in the government and parliament fled the capital by February 21, many heading for the eastern and southern parts of the country, while others continued into Russia.

After the flight of Yanukovych and his supporters, the Ukrainian parliament, now composed mainly of opposition deputies rapidly passed sweeping measures with little or no opposition. The parliament deposed Yanukovych as President on February 22 for abandoning his duties.

On February 27, the Ukrainian parliament approved a new government, headed by Arseniy Yatsenyuk, a former Prime Minister and leader of the Fatherland Party.

Later the people of Crimea have voted to become part of Russia in a bitterly disputed referendum. The referendum in Crimea on 16th March gave a 97 percent support in favour of joining Russia. The Western countries have held the referendum to be illegal. Undeterred, on 19th March, Russia signed a treaty with Crimea formalising the incorporation thus reversing the 1954 transfer of Crimea to Ukraine. The Ukrainian parliament declared the referendum unconstitutional

These developments have escalated tensions between Russia and the West to a level not seen since 1991. Russia has been suspended from the G8. The US and EU have also imposed sanctions against a dozen or so Russian and Crimean officials banning their travel to Europe and the US freezing their assets. This is a symbolic reaction but a chill has descended over Russia-West relations.

On March 27, the U.N. General Assembly passed a non-binding resolution 100 in favor, 11 against and 58 abstentions in the 193-nation assembly that declared invalid Crimea's Moscow-backed referendum. Russia dismissed a U.N. General Assembly resolution that branded Crimea's secession referendum invalid.

Significance of Crimea for Russia

The Crimean Peninsula extends into the Black Sea, a narrow strip of land in the north connect it to the mainland. On its eastern shore, a finger of land reaches out almost to Russia.

It is Ukraine's only formally autonomous region, with Simferopol as its capital. Sevastopol has a separate status within Ukraine. It's best known in the West as the site of the 1945 Yalta Conference, where Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sealed the postwar division of Europe.

It is home to the Russian Black Sea Fleet and its thousands of naval personnel. Russia kept its half of the Soviet fleet, but was rattled in 2009 when the pro-Western Ukrainian President

Viktor Yuschenko warned that it would have to leave the key port by 2017. Shortly after pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich was elected president in 2010, he agreed to extend the Russian lease until 2042 in exchange for discounts on Russian gas supplies. Russia fears that Ukraine's new pro-Western government could evict it.

For both Imperial Russia and then the Soviet Union, Crimea was a route to the Mediterranean.

Further Ukraine's population of forty-six million includes some eight million ethnic Russians, roughly 17 percent of the population. Crimea hosts Ukraine's largest ethnic Russian population (in proportional terms), many of whom are servicemen retired from the Black Sea Fleet.

Also Ukraine's induction into NATO would be a strategic catastrophe for Russia. NATO would come within 425 kilometres of Moscow, cut off Russia from the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, and squeeze it out of the Caucasus.

Apart from geopolitical compulsions, Moscow's support for Crimea's breakaway bid was driven by important domestic considerations. The protests in Ukraine, manipulated as they were by the West, reflected the rise of grass-root civic activity against corruption and authoritarianism - the same problems that bedevil Russia and that brought thousands of anti-government protesters onto the streets of Moscow two years ago. By intervening in Ukraine, Mr. Putin sought to stop the surging pro-democracy wave from spilling over to Russia.

②1 Iraq crisis

A civil war is raging in Iraq. There is a deadlock between the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (alternatively translated as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and abbreviated as ISIL or ISIS an unrecognized state and active Jihadist militant group in Iraq and Syria influenced by the Wahhabi movement). It is operating in Iraq and Syria.

Here we are analyzing the situation of IRAQ in FAQ form:

1. What was Operation Iraqi Freedom?

After the attacks on September 11, 2001, and the overthrow of the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, the United States Government turned its attention to Iraq and the regime of Saddam Hussein. Citing intelligence information that Iraq had stockpiled and continued to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMD) such as poison gas, biological agents, and nuclear weapons, as well as harboring and supporting members of Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorist network, the United States and Great Britain led a coalition to topple Hussein's regime in March 2003. Since the end of the Persian Gulf War of 1990-1991, the United States Air Force had maintained a continuous presence in the Middle East, enforcing no-fly zones in the northern and southern portions of Iraq, termed Operation NORTHERN WATCH, based out of Turkey, and Operation SOUTHERN WATCH, based out of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Finally, Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the U.S.-led coalition military operation in Iraq, was launched on March 20, 2003, with the immediate stated goal of removing Saddam Hussein's regime and destroying its ability to use weapons of mass destruction or to make them available to terrorists. Over time, the focus of OIF shifted from regime removal to the more open-ended mission of helping the Government of Iraq (GoI) improve security, establish a system of governance, and foster economic development.

2. What was the legality of the invasion?

The Authorization for Use of Military Force against Iraq Resolution of 2002 was passed by congress with Republicans voting 98% in favor in the Senate, and 97% in favor in the House.

Democrats supported the joint resolution 58% and 39% in the Senate and House respectively. The resolution asserts the authorization by the Constitution of the United States and the Congress for the President to fight anti-United States terrorism.

The resolution "supported" and "encouraged" diplomatic efforts by President George W. Bush to "strictly enforce through the U.N. Security Council all relevant Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq" and "obtain prompt and decisive action by the Security Council to ensure that Iraq abandons its strategy of delay, evasion, and noncompliance and promptly and strictly complies with all relevant Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq." The resolution authorized President Bush to use the Armed Forces of the United States "as he determines to be necessary and appropriate" to "defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions regarding Iraq.

3. What were the outcomes of Operation Iraqi Freedom?

The outcomes were:

- (a) End the regime of Saddam Hussein.
- (b) Elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.
- (c) Destruction of terrorist infrastructure in Iraq.
- (d) Coalition military forces secured Iraq's southern oil fields
- (e) Sanctions on Iraq were imposed by the United Nations Security Council as a result of the Hussein regime's unwillingness to abandon its weapons of mass destruction and terrorist programs, account for individuals missing from the 1991 Persian Gulf War, and stop its repression of the Iraqi civilian population. With the military action to remove the Hussein regime a success, U.N. sanctions against Iraq come to an end.
- (f) Estimates on the number of casualties during the invasion in Iraq vary widely. Estimates on civilian casualties are more variable than those for military personnel. According to Iraq Body Count, a group that relies on press reports, NGO-based reports and official figures to measure civilian casualties, approximately 7,500 civilians were killed during the invasion phase. The Project on Defense Alternatives study estimated that 3,200-4,300 civilians died during the invasion.

4. What was Operation New Dawn?

The transition to Operation New Dawn, Sept. 1, marks the official end to Operation Iraqi Freedom and combat operations by United States forces in Iraq.

During Operation New Dawn, the remaining 50,000 U.S. service members serving in Iraq will conduct stability operations, focusing on advising, assisting and training Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Operation New Dawn also represents a shift from a predominantly military U.S. presence to one that is predominantly civilian, as the Departments of Defense and State work together with governmental and non-governmental agencies to help build Iraq's civil capacity.

The transition to Operation New Dawn represents the U.S. commitment to the government and people of Iraq as a sovereign, stable country that will be an enduring strategic partner with the United States. This has been made possible by the improved capability of the ISF to take the lead in securing their country.

New Dawn also signifies the success of the responsible drawdown of forces and the redeployment of thousands of U.S. Soldiers, as well as the return or transfer of war fighting equipment to the U.S. or to combat troops fighting in Afghanistan.

5. What happened after withdrawal of US forces in 2011?

The withdrawal of American military forces from Iraq began in June 2009 and was completed by December 2011, bringing an end to the Iraq War.

Despite the elimination of a repressive single-party cult of personality state, the invasion and occupation led to sectarian violence which caused widespread displacement among Iraqi civilians. The Iraqi Red Crescent organization estimated the total internal displacement was around 2.3 million in 2008, and as many as 2 million Iraqis leaving the country. Poverty led many Iraqi women to turn to prostitution to support themselves and their families, attracting sex tourists from regional lands. The invasion led to a constitution which supported democracy as long as laws did not violate traditional Islamic principles, and a parliamentary election was held in 2005. In addition the invasion preserved the autonomy of the Kurdish region, and stability brought new economic prosperity. Because the Kurdish region is historically the most democratic area of Iraq, many Iraqi refugees from other territories fled into the Kurdish land.

6. What was the economic and political situation of Iraq after withdrawal?

Iraq's political and economic challenges dominated both its internal politics and relations with the US, Iran, and Iraq's other neighbors. To improve economic situation Iraq needs trade and cross-border support from Iran, just as it needs aid, diplomatic, and military support from the US. Iraq's much-reduced military capabilities make it dependent on aid, military sales, and training from the United States, and Iraq still lacks the resources and cohesion to resist against Iranian coercion and to defend against Iranian aggression.

A budget crisis that lasted from 2008 to 2010, and a political crisis that began long before the March 2010 election that produced a de facto stalemate in many aspects of governance, have added to these economic problems as well as sharply delayed critical qualitative improvements in every branch of Iraq's national security forces. Iraq has not been able to absorb and support many of the aid projects funded during the US occupation, and its problems in national governance have been compounded by corruption, political infighting, and sectarian and ethnic struggles at the provincial and local levels.

While the existence of vast oil reserves in Iraq are not in question, the country's petroleum sector faces many challenges that have limited its ability to produce, export, and deliver this valuable natural resource.

Battle over Iraq's natural resources has a significant impact on its domestic politics and divisions. Iraq faces political fallout between the central government and the Kurdish regional government (KRG) over energy contracts and the right to invite and award lucrative contracts to international companies. In April 2012, the KRG halted its supply of oil for export through Iraq's national pipeline, claiming that the central government owed over \$1.5 billion in operating costs to companies in the Kurdish region.

For its part, the government in Baghdad has threatened to simply deduct that lost oil revenue from what the KRG's portion of the Iraqi budget. At the same time, Iraq's oil-rich Shi'ite provinces want a larger share of the country's export earnings while other Arab Shi'ite and Sunni provinces want the distribution of these shares based on need of their portion of Iraq's total population.

Internal disputes between the central government and Iraq's oil rich regions, as well as poor infrastructure, political uncertainty, sabotage, and internal demand will further limit Iraq's ability to produce and export oil.

7. What were the criticisms for the USA invasion on Iraq?

The Bush Administration's rationale for the Iraq War has faced heavy criticism from an array of popular and official sources both inside and outside the United States, with many U.S.

citizens finding many parallels with the Vietnam War. For example a former CIA officer who described the Office of Special Plans as a group of ideologues who were dangerous to U.S. national security and a threat to world peace, and that the group lied and manipulated intelligence to further its agenda of removing Saddam. The Center for Public Integrity alleges that the Bush administration made a total of 935 false statements between 2001 and 2003 about Iraq's alleged threat to the United States.

Criticisms include:

- Legality of the invasion
- Human casualties
- Insufficient post-invasion plans, in particular inadequate troop levels (a RAND Corporation study stated that 500,000 troops would be required for success)
- Financial costs with approximately \$612 billion spent as of 4/09 the CBO has estimated the total cost of the war in Iraq to US taxpayers will be around \$1.9 trillion.
- Adverse effect on US-led global "war on terror"
- Damage to U.S.' traditional alliances and influence in the region, especially Israel and Saudi Arabia. Endangerment and ethnic cleansing of religious and ethnic minorities by insurgent.
- Disruption of Iraqi oil production and related energy security concerns (the price of oil has quadrupled since 2002)
- After President Barack Obama was inaugurated in 2009, some anti-war groups decided to stop protesting even though the war was still going on. Some of them decided to stop because they felt they should give the new President time to establish his administration, and others stopped because they believed that Obama would end the war.

The financial cost of the war has been more than £4.55 billion (\$9 billion) to the UK, and over \$845 billion to the US government. According to Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph E. Stiglitz and Harvard public finance lecturer Linda J. Bilmes it costs the United States \$720 million a day to wage the Iraq war. This number takes into account the long-term health care for veterans, interest on debt and replacement of military hardware.

In March 2013, the total cost of the Iraq War was estimated to have been \$1.7 trillion by the Watson Institute of International Studies at Brown University. Critics have argued that the total cost of the war to the US economy is estimated to be from \$3 trillion to \$6 trillion, including interest rates, by 2053.

Humanitarian crisis increased

Malnutrition rates have risen from 19% before the US led invasion to a national average of 28% four years later. Some 60-70% of Iraqi children are suffering from psychological problems. 68% of Iraqis have no access to safe drinking water. A cholera outbreak in northern Iraq is thought to be the result of poor water quality. As many as half of Iraqi doctors, have left the country since 2003. The use of depleted uranium and white phosphorus by the U.S. military has been blamed for birth defects and cancers in the Iraqi city of Fallujah. A study entitled "Birth defects in Iraq and the plausibility of environmental exposure: A review" was completed to review the impact of other war-related environmental factors on birth defects in Iraq.

As of 2011, nearly 3 million Iraqis have been displaced, with 1.3 million within the Iraq and 1.6 million in neighboring countries, mainly Jordan and Syria. More than half of Iraqi Christians have fled to neighboring countries since the start of the war.

8. What are the reasons for current crisis?

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite, took power in 2006 and largely left out many Sunnis from ascending in the political ranks, leaving religious strife as the centerpiece of this disagreement. In the past, al-Maliki has also been criticized for his alleged "spoils system" approach in promoting his political allies to posts in the military.

Earlier Shiite militants had encouraged by the government to conduct sectarian cleansing in mixed areas around Baghdad, particularly in Diyala province between Baghdad and the Iranian border. These events contributed to the motivation of Sunnis who have taken up arms or acquiesced in the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's offensive.

Even as the ISIS tide rolls southward down the Tigris, there is probably little danger of Baghdad and other Shiite areas falling into Sunni insurgent hands.

9. Who are the major players in the Iraq crisis?

The major players and groups in the crisis:

- **Insurgents**

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is a Sunni jihadist group that has its roots in the al-Qaeda-linked insurgents that formed the backbone of the resistance against U.S. forces in Iraq after the 2003 invasion. It has since expanded operations into Syria, where it is fighting the regime of Bashar Assad, and has broken formal ties with al-Qaeda. It embraces a radical form of Islam and consists of battle-hardened fighters.

Earlier this year, the group ransacked Fallujah and Ramadi, two influential Sunni cities in western Iraq. It has managed to hold much of Fallujah and portions of Ramadi. More recently it seized parts of Mosul and was positioned to edge toward Baghdad.

ISIL is also referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

- **Nouri al-Maliki**

The prime minister of Iraq leads a Shiite dominated government that has alienated many of the Sunnis in Iraq over the past several years. Maliki has been criticized for not taking more steps to include rival Sunni leaders in his government.

Shiites are the majority sect in Iraq, but for most of Iraq's history they were oppressed by the Sunnis, who dominated the government. Saddam Hussein and his key leaders were all Sunnis. Shiite leaders during that time were driven into exile.

- **Iraq's armed forces**

Organized, trained and, to some extent, equipped by the United States, the Iraqi military was a competent force when the United States pulled all its forces out in 2011.

But over the past several years Maliki has been accused of appointing political cronies to key leadership positions and the military has ceased to conduct regular training. Sunnis have said the army is little more than another Shiite militia and have little confidence in its ability to protect them. Many units simply collapsed when insurgents attacked Mosul and other cities in Iraq.

- **Shiite militias**

During the U.S. occupation of Iraq, Shiite militias, some of which were backed by Iran, grew to become powerful forces. Among the strongest such militias is the Mahdi Army, a group loyal to anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

Shiite militias at various times attacked U.S. forces and also participated in sectarian warfare in Iraq between Sunnis and Shiites, which peaked in 2006. Most of the insurgent gains were in Sunni or mixed areas. Shiite militias will likely try to protect Shiite neighborhoods if insurgents attempt to move into Baghdad.

10. Who are ISIS?

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (alternatively translated as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria or Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham abbreviated ISIL and ISIS, is an unrecognized state and active Jihadist militant group in Iraq and Syria. In its unrecognized self-proclaimed status as an independent state, it claims the territory of Iraq and Syria, with implied future claims intended over more of the Levant including Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Cyprus and Southern Turkey.

It was established in the early years of the Iraq War and has pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2004. The group was composed of and supported by a variety of insurgent groups, including its predecessor organisation, the Mujahideen Shura Council, Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Jaysh al-Fatiheen, Jund al-Sahaba, Katbiyan Ansar Al-Tawhid wal Sunnah, Jeish al-Taiifa al-Mansoura etc., and other clans whose population profess Sunni Islam. Its aim was to establish a caliphate in the Sunni majority regions of Iraq, later expanding this to include Syria. In February 2014, after an eight-month power struggle, al-Qaeda cut all ties with ISIS.

In addition to attacks on government and military targets, the group has claimed responsibility for attacks that have killed thousands of Iraqi civilians. Despite significant setbacks for the group during the latter stages of the Coalition's presence in Iraq, by late 2012 the group was thought to have renewed its strength and more than doubled the number of its members to about 2,500.

In early June 2014, following its large-scale offensives in Iraq, ISIS have seized control of most of Mosul, the second most populous city in Iraq, its surrounding Nineveh province, and the city of Fallujah. ISIS has also taken control of Tikrit, the administrative center of the Salah ad Din Governorate, with the ultimate goal of capturing Baghdad, the Iraqi capital. ISIS was believed to have only 2,000-3,000 fighters up until the Mosul campaign, but during that campaign it became evident that this number was a gross underestimate.

11. What steps can be taken to control the problem?

The problem will only get worse in the coming months. Now that the Iraqi government's weakness in Sunni territories has been exposed, other Sunni extremist groups are joining forces with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria to exploit the opening. The Baathist-affiliated Naqshbandi Army and the Salafist Ansar al-Sunna Army are reportedly taking part in the offensive as well, and they are drawing support from a Sunni population that believes itself persecuted and disenfranchised by al-Maliki's government and threatened by Shiite militias that are his political allies.

The problem at its core is not just a matter of security, but politics. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and its allies would not have had the opportunity to seize ground in the Sunni Arab-dominated provinces of Salaheddin, Nineveh and Anbar if there had been more inclusive and sincere political outreach to the mainstream Sunni Arab community.

In the end, the solution to the ISIS threat is a fundamental change in Iraq's political discourse, which has become dominated by one sect and one man, and the inclusion of mainstream Sunni Arabs and Kurds as full partners in the state.

If al-Maliki truly wishes to restore government control to the Sunni provinces, he must reach out to Sunni and Kurdish leaders and ask for their help, and he must re-enlist former Sons of



GS SCORE

An initiative by: **S. K. Mishra, IAS (Retd.) & Manoj K. Jha**

IAS 2015

IAS Exam is persistently undergoing a change, being brought to ensemble the contemporary aptness. In the midst of this transition GS SCORE is starting GS Mains 2015 Programme under the expert guidance of **S. K. Mishra & Team**.

**Batch Starts
5th January, 2015**

GS Mains 2015

- ✓ 300 Hrs. Comprehensive Courses
- ✓ From 20th January to 10th April, 2015

- ✓ Full coverage of all four Papers
- ✓ Complete Study Material

Selective Learning Programme

Ethics Integrity & Aptitude

- ✓ By S. K. Mishra
- ✓ Complete Coverage of Syllabus
- ✓ 100 Case Studies
- ✓ 45 Days Comprehensive Course
- ✓ 4 Tests Including Model Answer
- ✓ Comprehensive Study Material

Essay Writing

10 comprehensive classes that emphasises on Writing Skill, Building Conceptual Clarity & Developing Analytical Ability to handle essay on diverge topics.

GS Mains 2015 Test Series

- ✓ 14 Tests
- ✓ 4 Full Tests
- ✓ Model Answer Hints
- ✓ Detailed Discussion
- ✓ Study Material for Current Affairs
- ✓ Start: 1st February, 2015

Distance Learning Programme IAS 2015-16

- In depth analysis of each subject
- Complete coverage of all topics
- Separate test for each subject area
- Comprehensive Tests for GS Mains & PT
- Separate module for Ethics Paper is also available
- Current Affairs ● Essay ● 24x7 Online Support

www.iasscore.in
Self Study Partner

For more information, Call
011 - 47058253

Head Office: Rajender Nagar

Off. No. 6, 1st Floor, Apsara Arcade, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-5, (Karol Bagh Metro Gate No. 5)

9953607114, 9953595114

f www.facebook.com/iasscore

Iraq leaders, purged military commanders and Kurdish Peshmerga to help regain the territory they once helped the Iraqi government defend. But these are steps a-Maliki has shown himself unwilling and unlikely to take.

Recommendations for a path forward

In this complicated and quickly evolving situation, the steps that can be taken are:

- To weaken ISIS to prevent it from controlling substantial territory in Iraq from which it can become a threat to the region.
- To reduce threats of growing sectarian conflict sparking a wider regional war
- To safeguard reliable and capable partners such as Jordan, Turkey, and the Kurdistan Regional Government.
- The nations should engage in a regional full-court press involving top military, intelligence, and diplomatic officials to persuade relevant regional stakeholders-Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and even Iran-to step back from actions in Iraq and Syria that could lead to a wider regional war.
- Additional security and intelligence coordination and operations with Jordan, Turkey, and the Kurdistan Regional Government are essential, along with humanitarian assistance to help care for those displaced by the crisis. These partners have intelligence and capabilities that should leverage to degrade the threat from ISIS.
- Action against ISIS in Iraq alone will likely push the problem back across the border into Syria, where ISIS controls large swaths of ungoverned territory. This possibility requires more robust efforts to train and equip the moderate Syrian opposition forces that have shown a willingness and ability to fight ISIS and Assad, something CAP has called for previously. The administration and Congress should make this the first test of President Obama's Counterterrorism Partnership Fund, using resources already dedicated to Overseas Contingency Operations. Details about vetting, the location for training, and the types of equipment necessary should be worked out rapidly.

