

POLICY BRIEF No. 4



Centre for Public Policy & Governance
Forman Christian College (A Chartered University)

US Withdrawal from Afghanistan & Pakistan's Strategy

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The Centre for Public Policy & Governance (CPPG) held a day long policy dialogue titled "US Withdrawal from Afghanistan & Pakistan's Strategy" on the 28th of July 2011. The dialogue was divided into two sessions, One, "Pakistan's Afghan Policy in Light of American Exit Strategy" and two, "Counter Terrorism and Counter Extremism Strategy". This was followed by a session on Next Steps. The objective of the dialogue was to build a consensus among the various stakeholders on the future direction of Pakistan's policy in light of the existing policy framework and examining the range of policy options available. This Policy Brief provides a short summary of the key consensus points among the participants. It also highlights issues that require further deliberation.

Pakistan's Afghan Policy in Light of American Exit Strategy

US Withdrawal: There was a general consensus that US was unlikely to withdraw completely from the region as it had long term interests. It was argued by some that there was an evolving convergence of interest between US-China on South Asia. It was also observed that America's economic and domestic political concerns would lead to real draw down of troops and eventual transfer of power to the Afghans; others argued that without a functioning Political Centre in Afghanistan, dialogue among Afghan parties and Afghans assuming management of their security looked suspect while the declared drawdown policy was in fact a pull back of surge troops and 'end game'-- only suggesting a period of transition. The real question was whether the transition would be peaceful and if Pakistan would seize the opportunities that this transition period offers. There was a general consensus that Pakistan needed to redefine its terms of engagement with the US rather than move towards a path of confrontation.

Strategic Depth: A broad consensus emerged that the policy of Strategic Depth[†] needed to be revisited. Since the 1980's, its quest has been futile and has caused horrific blowback manifested in the form of militarization and radicalization of society. Pakistan's domestic anti-terror and anti-extremism strategy has been held subservient to it, with the State providing institutional patronage to militant non-state actors. It has disconcerted some important friendly countries in the region and could accelerate Pakistan's isolation from the world. Before it spirals completely out of control, a serious review and rollback of 'strategic depth' policy was in order.