

# Peace and stability in afghanistan politics essay



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Even after almost eight years of international community's efforts in Afghanistan the instability and turbulence has increased rather than abated. Not only has Afghanistan seen ever increasing levels of violence and loss of life the virus of instability and culture of violence has also spread across the Durand line with hardly any silver line on the horizon. A deadly insurgency, higher opium production, increasing civilian casualties, rampant corruption, an unstable neighbourhood and an uncertain political future remain the defining features of the complex and combustible situation that obtains in Afghanistan. Much of the initial euphoria generated after the fall of Taliban in 2001 has dissipated and those advances made in the fields of education and women's rights have been overshadowed. The prospects for preventing Afghanistan from being sucked into this whirlpool of chaos appear bleaker than ever.[1]

2. America's Af-Pak policy which was announced in end of March 2009, needs to be scrutinised to gauge its progress and success or otherwise. The main pillars of this strategy were based on not only in increase of force levels but also on increase of the resources devoted to economic development and coordination among international donors building Afghan governing structures primarily at local level reforming the Afghan government expanding and reforming the Afghan security forces and trying to improve Pakistan's efforts to curb militant activity on its soil. The strategy also included negotiations with Taliban figures that were willing to enter the political process. After the

Presidential election there is a need to again review the security, governance and development and aid structures and delivery mechanisms.

3. Major factor impacting the situation in Afghanistan is the continued resurgence of Taliban due to a host of contextual factors. The Taliban is estimated to have a permanent presence in 72 per cent of Afghanistan; its hold being strong not only in its bastions of the South but also in the East, where it literally runs a parallel government. Moreover the insurgency is spreading in a manner in which it has begun to ring the capital city of Kabul, with three of the four main roads leading to Kabul being rendered unsafe for Afghan or International travel. Successes against the Taliban, whether military or of winning ' hearts and minds' have been limited as the Taliban appear to be striking at will with lethal force and is increasingly successful in the propaganda war.

4. Governance is another area where the normal populace has been disillusioned with current dispensation. Endemic corruption plaguing much of the government machinery, especially the police and judiciary, both of which affect the everyday life of the common man, has undermined credibility of the elected government and helped build up a degree of local support which stems more out of the Taliban's ability to fill in the governance vacuum as opposed to ideological support for their cause.

5. Developmental aid has been delivered to Afghanistan in vast quantities but it is not visible on the ground. Fruits of this aid have yet to be tasted by the common people. Bonn process was followed by London Compact and there is an Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) for 15 years ahead but the timelines and benchmarks outlined in the same have not been adhered to. And the economic aid promised to realize the ANDS has also not

been delivered whereas there is a massive spending by the NATO and Coalition forces to the tune of about US \$20 billion a month.

6. How can, therefore, the international community improve on the delivery mechanisms and implementation measures? This remains one of the key questions in the current conundrum of security and development complicated further by weak governance. Surge in development and aid funds and personnel planned as part of the Af-Pak strategy may help but some of the contextual core issues would yet need to be addressed before a positive outcome could be expected.

7. Looking at a wider perspective, how do the regional stake holders view the Afghan imbroglio? How can their varying perceptions be reconciled for the cause of common good?

8. Further, the presence of safe havens in Pakistan's lawless frontier regions have played a seminal role in sustaining the insurgency in Afghanistan and fuelling instability in Pakistan, thus making it impossible to visualize a solution to the Afghan quagmire in isolation.

9. Given the above background what could be alternative future scenarios in Afghanistan say in next 4 to 5 years time and 8 to 10 years time keeping in mind the trends and drivers and possible triggers? Based on the emerging scenarios what should be the international community's policy and strategy choices to ensure a favourable outcome? A broad range of critical issues affecting the Afghan environment need to be examined before a determination as to how to proceed further can be made.

10. Broadly, therefore, the seminar on peace and stability in Afghanistan and the way ahead is built around four themes of security, governance and examination of likely future scenarios and offering recommendations for policy and strategy choices which can be made now so as to move towards a better and brighter future for Afghanistan and in effect for rest of the international community.

## METHODOLOGY

### Statement of Problem

11. To analyze the effects of likely political instability in Afghanistan post withdrawal of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and its implications for India and policies that India needs to adopt to deal with this problem.

### Justification of Study

12. United States is increasingly getting impatient in the affairs of Afghanistan wherein its policies are not delivering the desired results. It is likely to reduce its foot prints in that country and has accordingly set a deadline for withdrawal of ISAF.

13. The goal of US in Afghanistan is to defeat Al Qaeda and deny them the bases in that country, so as to improve its own homeland security. As per US, achievement of this goal is not dependent on creating an environment of political reconciliation in Afghanistan, which is difficult and time consuming. Rather its goal can be achieved by entering into an agreement with one

entity: Taliban, who may agree to keep Al Qaeda out in exchange of returning back to power.

### Hypothesis

14. The return of Taliban or any civil war post de-induction of ISAF would hurt India dearly. India would prefer a sovereign, democratic & secular Afghanistan which is not under the influence of powers inimical to our interests.

15. Therefore, India must ensure that the world community does not abandon Afghanistan at this crucial juncture and continue to provide for its political reconciliation and rehabilitation. In this regard, deployment of UN sponsored security forces with a much larger agenda than the ISAF is looked into, so as to allow the country to become strong both politically and economically.

### Methods of Data Collection

16. The study is primarily based on information gathered from books written by prominent Indian, foreign authors as well as information available on the internet. There has also been an attempt by me to analyse the events as they have unfolded and suggest possible options and own responses. Other sources of information are articles written in Indian, Pakistani, Western newspapers and news services such as the CNN and BBC as well as some defence journals. A bibliography of the sources is appended at the end of the text. Afghanistan being a very current topic has undergone a series of ups and downs during the course of my preparation of the dissertation. The Bonn

Agreement is very relevant in today's context and is also attached as an appendix.

Scope

17. The study will be covered under the following heads:-

Chapter I Introduction

Chapter II Geo strategic importance of Afghanistan to India

Strategic location of Afghanistan

Key to Energy Security

Pakistan's desire of achieving strategic depth by having control over Afghanistan's polity

Chapter III Brief history of Afghanistan post 9/11

Defeat of Taliban and set up of new Government

Role of Pakistan in combating terrorism

Chapter IV : Present imbroglio in Afghanistan.

Failure of US policies in Afghanistan

Growing frustration amongst US and NATO forces

Poor governance by Karzai and growth of Taliban

Chapter V : Likely Future Scenarios and Implications for India

Withdrawal of US forces and re emergence of Taliban

Depletion of US footprint and renewed violence

Pakistan getting foothold in Afghanistan and involvement of Al Qaida in Kashmir

Indian involvement reduced with a hostile government in Afghanistan

Chapter VII Options Available To India

Make efforts to ensure continuous presence of International security force in Afghanistan

Involving UN in peace establishment in Afghanistan

Continuing support to government in Afghanistan by undertaking rebuilding projects

Chapter VIII : Conclusion.

CHAPTER II

BRIEF HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN POST 9/11

OP Enduring Freedom

On September 20, 2001, in the wake of the September 11 attacks, US President George W. Bush delivered an ultimatum to the Taliban government of Afghanistan to turn over Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda leaders operating in the country or face attack. The Taliban demanded evidence of Bin Laden's link to the September 11 attacks and, if such evidence warranted a trial, <https://assignbuster.com/peace-and-stability-in-afghanistan-politics-essay/>



they offered to handle such a trial in an Islamic Court. The US refused to provide any evidence. Subsequently, in October 2001, US forces along with UK and coalition allies invaded Afghanistan to oust the Taliban regime. On October 7, 2001, the official invasion began with British and US forces conducting air strike campaigns. Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, fell by mid-November. The remaining al-Qaeda and Taliban remnants fell back to the rugged mountains of Eastern Afghanistan, mainly Tora Bora. In December, the US and her allies fought within that region. It's believed that Osama bin-Laden escaped into Pakistan during the battle.

In March 2002, the United States and other NATO and non-NATO forces launched Operation Anaconda in the hopes that they'll destroy any remaining al-Qaeda and Taliban forces in the Shahi-Kot Valley and Arma Mountains of Afghanistan. The Taliban suffered heavy casualties and evacuated the region. The Taliban regrouped in Western Pakistan and began to unleash an insurgent-style offensive against the United States and her allies in late 2002.

#### Formation of Civilian Government

After Operation Enduring Freedom, Mujahideen loyal to the Northern Alliance and many other groups mustered support for a new government in Afghanistan. In December 2001, political leaders gathered in Germany to agree on new leadership structures for Afghanistan. Under the Bonn Agreement, an interim Transitional Administration was formed and Hamid Karzai was named the Chairman of a 29-member governing committee. On 13 June 2002, the Loya Jirga, appointed Karzai as the Interim President of the

Afghan Transitional Administration.[28] The former members of the Northern Alliance remained extremely influential in the new dispensation.

Hamid Karzai won the 2004 presidential election, and became President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. He defeated 22 opponents and became the first democratically elected leader of Afghanistan. Although his campaigning was limited due to fears of violence, elections passed without any significant incident in spite of a surge of insurgent activity.]

6. After Karzai was installed into power, his actual authority outside the capital city of Kabul was said to be so limited that he was often derided as the “ Mayor of Kabul”. The situation was particularly delicate since Karzai and his administration had not been equipped either financially or politically to influence reforms outside of the region around the capital city of Kabul. Other areas, particularly the more remote ones, were historically under the influence of various local leaders. Karzai started making attempts to negotiate and form amicable alliances with them for the benefit of Afghanistan as a whole, instead of aggressively fighting them and risking an uprising.

### CHAPTER III

#### BEGINNING OF CHAOS

##### America’s Miscalculation

President Bush, speaking at the Virginia Military Institute in the spring of 2002, proposed a Marshall Plan for Afghanistan and its neighbours that added up to state-building on a regional scale. But the post 9-11 Pentagon

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long stuck with a “ narrow”, or “ sharp” focus on wiping out Al Qaeda and the Taliban, with a corresponding under-focus on long-term development. Other agencies of the US Government struggled to advance their programs with little coordination either with the Pentagon or with one other, and with much micro-managing by e-mail from offices in Washington. But even had the Pentagon “ gotten it right” or the other agencies been better coordinated, the program would still not have worked, for US’ policy (and UN policy as well) suffered from a birth defect. When the US finally toppled the Taliban, Tajiks from the Northern Alliance took control of Kabul. In a winner-take-all move, they immediately packed the government with their own supporters and relatives, to the exclusion both of Pashtuns, the largest group in the population, and minority Shi’a Hazaras. Eager to sidestep all dissension, the UN’s Bonn meetings in December, 2001, ratified this dangerous status quo, while the “ Emergency Loya Jirga,” held in June, 2002, then ratified the Bonn conference’s

mistakes. While U. S. officials talked bravely of “ working the situation,” Northern Alliance leaders in Kabul effectively consolidated their hold on power. Marshall Fahim, confirmed in Bonn as Afghanistan’s Minister of Defense, kept his own militia lodged in the capital and cut personal deals with like-minded warlords elsewhere, greatly complicating the task of building a national army. Worse, he and his family seized control of key markets and other assets to create their own income stream, independent of Karzai and the Americans. Many Pashtuns, as they watched this unfold and noted their fellow-Pashtun Karzai’s inability to counteract it, went into a sullen opposition. A few resorted to armed opposition. Since most Taliban

leaders had been Pashtun, this gave the appearance of a Taliban revival. In fact, it was worse, a new movement of Pashtuns and other groups aggrieved over having been excluded from the post-Taliban order. Because the US backed Karzai, they blamed their own marginalization on America. This bitter mood gave rise to a new opposition and new insecurity. Charged with rooting out remnants of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, the US worked with whatever forces were at hand, including warlords, postponing to a later phase the achievement of balance within the Kabul government and the consolidation of state institutions.

Light Footprint.

Afghanistan was the least resourced of any American led nation building operation. There are 1.5 international soldiers for every 1000 persons in Afghanistan compared to 20.5 per 1000 in Kosovo, 19 in Bosnia, 10 in Sierra Leone and nearly 4 in Haiti. Post conflict stabilization operations require more troops and longer time than to win the initial fight. In fighting, firepower and technology enable smaller, more agile forces to prevail. But in post conflict stabilization and reconstruction, there is a need for more ground troops, money and time. Low levels of investment in military power and economic assistance in post conflict reconstruction lead to a low level of security, ineffective governance and poor economic growth.

From the outset, two contradictory concepts drove international intervention in Afghanistan. The country was described as the major front of a global war on terror, yet the intervention was light footprint engagement. This light footprint continued to impair every aspect of reconstruction of Afghanistan .

Taliban was removed from power, but neither their potential to return nor their external support was addressed. The focus on accomplishing short term security goals undermined the efforts at establishing positive long term trends.

### Mis governance

The general opinion in Afghanistan is that the insurgency is rising because the people have lost faith in government. The security forces have failed to protect local villages and the institutions struggle to deliver basic services. The patience of people with government is breaking down and it in turn is favouring the return of Taliban.

The afghan government had difficulty providing essential services to the population, especially in rural areas of the country. As per a World Bank report, the main beneficiary of assistance was the urban elite. This triggered deep seated frustration and resentment among rural population. The government suffered a number of systematic problems and had difficulty attracting and retaining skilled professionals with management and administrative experience. Due to lack of investment and poor maintenance only 6% of the population received electricity. Most efforts were to supply electricity to the urban areas and not to the rural areas which were falling to Taliban.

The Afghan government faced challenges providing security outside of the capital. A major reason was the poor state of the Afghan national police. The result was weak security apparatus that could not establish monopoly of the legitimate use of force within the country. The police was not an

international priority after the overthrow of the Taliban regime and they received significantly less money and attention than the army. The Afghan police was needed to help establish order in urban and rural areas, but they were heavily out gunned by the insurgent. The police force was plagued with corruption and lacked semblance of a national police force.

### Pakistani Dimension

Pakistan has played a very strong role in Afghanistan in the last three decades, unfortunately, it has been a very negative role. With the fall of Taliban in Afghanistan, Pakistan lost its political clout in that country but it retained its links with the Taliban and actively assisted insurgency in Afghanistan. It was only due to intense pressure from America that Pakistan reluctantly agreed to stop aid to Taliban. However, as it became clear later that Pakistan was not committed to end terror.

Pakistan decided to hold talks with the militant leaders in Swat and offered to stop all military actions against them. This further fuelled insurgency in Afghanistan and increased attacks on US and NATO forces.

### Revival of Taliban

Almost five years after the defeat of Taliban regime, there was a resurgence of Taliban in 2006. Their return could be divided into three stages through which the group gradually gained momentum especially at the last stage that started in 2006.

The first stage, from 2002 to 2003, had a relatively tangible lull. However, there were some small bombings from time to time. In 2003, the Mullah

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Mohamed Omar launched a new Jihad council comprising of ten military leaders of Taliban. The group could achieve this essential military restructuring cashing in on the US shift of focus towards Iraq.

The second stage, from 2004 to 2005, witnessed a number of remarkable activities and developments in tactics of fighting, types of weapons, and the group's deployment in several areas. The Taliban started to carry out some military operations in daylight and managed to fully control some remote areas of south Afghanistan. The third stage, from 2006 to 2007, marked the "overwhelming return" of the Taliban. The year 2006 was the bloodiest one since the fall of the Taliban, as more than 4, 000 were killed, including one third of civilians. The British-American council for media security reported in a comparison between the years 2005 and 2006 that there was an increase in the attacks on the NATO forces from 900 in 2005 to 2500 attacks in 2006. One of the major achievements of the Taliban in this period of time was that they managed to run people's affairs in some southern areas establishing a good network and friendly relationships with the residents of the south.

Taliban Strategy. Analysts pointed out that Taliban had established a two pronged strategy in Afghanistan. First to re establish its authority over the southern provinces around its former headquarters in Kandahar and second to destabilize a ring of provinces around Kabul.

## CHAPTER IV

### US EXIT POLICY AND LIKELY FUTURE SECURITY SCENARIOS

#### Af-Pak Policy

On 23 January, 2009, American President Mr Obama announced his Af-Pak policy wherein he stressed that his administration was committed in refocusing attention and resources on Afghanistan. The salient features of his policy were:

Appointment of special envoy Mr Richard Holbrooke to Pakistan and Afghanistan to help lead US effort to forge and implement strategic and sustainable approach to the region.

Pakistan told to destroy the safe heavens for Al-Qaeda and Taliban in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan.

Deployment of 17, 000 additional troops in Afghanistan to improve security situation.

The American President had laid out a very bold and responsible policy to counter the resurgent Taliban insurgency in Af-Pak region. However, within a short span of one and half years the American policy has undergone a complete change with President himself laying down the withdrawal plan of ISAF( International Security Assistance Force) and the Secretary of State , Mrs Hillary Clinton stressing the need to reintegrate the insurgents in the political mainstream of Afghanistan. This dramatic turnabout of American plans regards Afghanistan is due to various factors,

American Losses. The American or the NATO losses have been increasing and with every passing year the Taliban is becoming stronger and stronger. Even though more and more troops have been deployed and more money



pumped in but still the attacks on the ISAF are only increasing. The Taliban tactics have now graduated to frontal attacks on US outposts.

US Goals in Afghanistan.... There is a profound confusion in America regarding what US goals in Afghanistan ought to be and what the means for resolving those goals should be? The debate is on whether US should focus narrowly on issues of counter terrorism or should they focus on counter terrorism and counter insurgency. It is also being debated whether US should really be engaged in business of state building or can workaroud by negotiating with adversaries, the Taliban. These debates in domestic politics are turning against an extended and continuing commitment to Afghanistan.

Crisis of Resolution The allies are tired of the Afghan commitment, because they do not understand how the struggle that is going on, in this far away land has an impact on their own security. The urgency that the world felt on 12 September 2001 has weakened with the passage of time. Afghanistan seems too hard, too complex, and too difficult and as the legend goes would continue to be the graveyard of empires. If this is true than why should we and the international community continue to make commitments to a war that by some ' iron laws of history' is ultimately destined to end up in defeat?

(d) Crisis of Resources. America is investing heavily in Afghanistan. There is no gainsaying the fact that the commitments to Afghanistan and Pakistan are costly to the US. In 2010, America has committed \$65 billion to Afghanistan. If we take into account the aid to Pakistan, the total comes to \$85 billion, these are not small commitments. If the lives of troops, wastage of equipment and wear and tear on forces that have been engaged in this

theatre are taken into consideration especially at a time when America is in economic crisis itself and the entire world community is struggling with the global crisis, the cost is phenomenal. Many NATO countries are focused on these costs and argue that a way must be found for a quick exit from Afghanistan. This has made the job of US President more difficult.

### Choices for America

The International community and especially America faces two choices for Afghanistan. The first is to 'invest and endure' in Afghanistan and the second is 'to improve conditions, in order to exit'. These are the two strategic choices that US has to contemplate as it talks about the way ahead, as each strategy has a different consequence.

**Invest and Endure.** If US have to carry out this option, then they have to build consensus domestically and internationally on the enduring importance of Afghanistan. All members of international coalition have to commit to the resources required i. e. military, economic and diplomatic institution. This option of 'invest and endure' cannot simply be a military campaign. It has to be an effort to re-constitute societies by

changing the counter-insurgency strategy and focusing more on protecting population and minimising collateral damage.

**Improve and Exit.** In case America and other NATO countries decide to improve the conditions in order to exit they will have to adopt a different strategy. The ideological adversaries will not have to be defeated but only

kept at bay for sometime in order to improve conditions. The investments in the institutions, social welfare and democracy would be minimum.

Americans have started to realize that military solution is far difficult to achieve as compared to a political solution. They have started saying for quite some time that they want re-conciliation and talks with Taliban if they can lay down their arms. There have been covert contacts with certain Taliban elements, however, it has not produce any results till now. Even President Karzai has realized the precarious state of ISAF and have himself started wooing the Taliban so that his government can last even after the International forces withdraw.

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So without clear success how long will American stay? NATO and Afghanistan have recently agreed to fix 2014 as the deadline for troops withdrawal from Afghanistan in a phased manner. They have also clarified that troops can stay in support role even beyond 2014. However, mounting coalition deaths, growing domestic pressure in NATO

countries and the increasing differences between Karzai and the west may change the situation. Also, any major military debacle like, a US post being overrun by Taliban or an

air crash with significant casualties may immediately catalyze opposition to war. Even the 2012 Presidential elections may require early troop withdrawal in the there is no clear sign of success.

Likely Future Scenarios

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The debate on likely security scenarios emerging in the region post withdrawal of ISAF is gaining momentum in India.

Many analysts have generated three plausible scenarios which are likely to emerge post withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan.

(a) Scenario 1 US withdrawal or draw down of forces - Return of the Taliban

It is pointed out that in case of a complete US withdrawal, the probability of return of Taliban is not farfetched, thereby condemning Afghanistan to what US analysts describe as the worst case scenario. This would also lead to an emboldening of the Al Qaeda, instability spreading to Pakistan and Central Asia, thus reducing the region to become a base for Al Qaeda operations.

(b) Scenario 2- US limited engagement-' proxy war'... The most probable scenario beyond 2014 is the reduced US presence in Afghanistan with troops limited to protecting key cities, a shift from overstretched counterinsurgency operations to internal defence. This would allow Pakistan to continue its ' hedging' strategy whereby it will continue supporting the Afghan Taliban to destabilise Afghanistan with the eventual goal of reinstating a pliant regime.

Scenario 3- US long term commitments -Building on Afghan state. According to the analysts, this is the best case scenario for Afghanistan, though such a state of affairs is highly unlikely given the reduced public support for the Afghan war in the United States. This would call for additional resources including troops to train and partner with Afghan forces and continuation of the institution building programmes. In this scenario, India could play a long

term role in the training of the Afghan national institutions, institutional building political, and security and justice sector reforms.

## CHAPTER V

### GEO STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF AFGHANISTAN

“ When Allah had made the rest of the world, He saw there was a lot of rubbish left over, bits and pieces and things that did not fit anywhere else. He collected them all together and threw them down on the earth. That was Afghanistan.”

An old Afghan Saying

Geographical Location

Afghanistan is a land locked country with Iran to its west, Pakistan to its south and east, China to its north east and the newly independent states of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to its north. Afghanistan covers an area of 245, 000 square miles and is surrounded by two nuclear states, China and Pakistan, a threshold nuclear state, Iran and having three other nuclear powers in its near vicinity, India, Kazakhstan and Russia. This places Afghanistan in a difficult situation with its neighbours as well other regional and non regional powers vying to get a foothold in the country to spread their influence in the region and the subcontinent. It is also the land bridge between South Asia and Central Asia and possibly to Iran as well.

Safe Sanctuary for Islamic Fundamentalism

Apart from being the land bridge to central Asia, Afghanistan has been a home to the fundamentalist of various hues and colours ranging from the Jihadis from Kashmir to the Uighur separatists. Afghanistan certainly provided a suitable launch pad for such activities in Central Asia, more so when the Taliban was at the helm of affairs. Taliban played host to Al Qaida and its leader Osama Bin Laden. The strengthening of links between militant organisations like IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan), Al Qaida, the Chechen rebels, Uighur separatists and the Taliban, further compounded the security situation in the region.

### Energy Resources in Afghanistan

In terms of natural resources, Soviets had estimated Afghanistan's proven and probable gas reserves at up to five trillion cubic feet. However, the production has been affected by years of war, and new reserves are yet to be located due to lack of any serious exploration having been carried out for the last 30 yrs or so due to the prevailing situation. The northern areas adjoining Central Asia have proven reserves of natural gas estimated at 100 billion cubic meters, the Jar Quduk oil and gas complex being a case in point. Afghanistan also has an estimated coal reserve of up to 400 million tons located between Herat and Badakhshan. However, due to the situation in Afghanistan, the production has remained low and unless serious efforts are made in the near future, Afghanistan will continue to play its historical role of serving more as a transit route for others than as an exporter of its own resources.

Oil and Gas Pipelines.... The Central Asian republics hold the key to large resources of energy i. e oil and gas. The landlocked nature of these states imposes inherent constraints in unravell