

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



August 15, 2015

Transforming Af-Pak Relation

Out of all the violence unleashed by Taliban amidst the rumors of division among their rank is maddening. Earlier, the series of attack at different venues have left the security officials revisit their plan to track down the militants. It was the continuation of wave of attacks that rocked the Kabul city with loud bangs. Following the attack and assessments the highly credible security institution pointed out at Pakistan to being behind the attack. Undoubtedly, Taliban's socialization and association are reportedly taking place on the other side Pak-Afghan border –is itself condemnable undertaking. However, a security institution is assigned to follow through the foiling of terror plots and keeping a close watch over their suspicious movements not issuing the finding of their reports –instead interior ministry is meant to do that.

Over all it is the responsibility of a government and concerned departments within a state to ensure peace and security of its citizens. However, the governments that suffer from administrative incapacities fail to guarantee security must fill this gap. And in such states the weaker strata of the society tend to suffer the most –it must be turned a false assumption. Women, ethnic and religious minorities and the common people as a whole undergo anguish as a result. Afghanistan is also one of the countries where the government has not been able to provide enough security to its people and the common people face different sorts of problems every day.

In all the worsening security state depicts the insurgents are expanding the range of their operations. The insurgents are operating at will and quite rapidly expanding operations to parts of the country where it previously appeared to have little ability to act. It also seems that the militants are familiar with important installations, and their attacks are meticulously staged. If a wise and coordinated strategy is not pursued then control over eastern and southern Afghanistan might slip into the hands of the Taliban with no apparent ability to foil this, post US pull out. The escalating violence across the country also sparks the concern over how the large strong Afghan security forces manage to tackle security measure left alone to fight on ground.

Formerly, the Afghan Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) report raised concerns about the increased level of violence and the spike in civilian casualties recorded so far this year. On the basis of AIHRC findings, armed oppositions are responsible for more than 70 per cent of civilian casualties, which has increased dramatically, in the country. The Afghan local police standing on the front curbing insurgent's attacks unwittingly retaliate leading to great civilian casualties. It is seen the well trained regiment of army personnel stationed on standby reach to the rescue of trapped police personnel when they have already sought refuge amongst civic population. The Independent Human Rights Commission meanwhile chronicled a 30 percent rise in civilian casualties that is sharp increase in comparison to data in the first six months last year.

It is generally witnessed every devastating attack in Kabul quavers the shaky relation between Islamabad and Kabul which after a bilateral session or two tend to settle down, momentarily until the onset of another tragedy. Earlier, President Ashraf Ghani held a press conference in which he pointed the finger of blame at Pakistan, saying that Islamabad continued to aid and abet the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. Notwithstanding, the tale of accusation and clarification that came into appearance following the former wave of attacks seemed to have defected the bilateral relation of Afghanistan and Pakistan –it gestured to have averted the relation to some disruptive course. In order to resettle the state of affair, a high level delegation from Afghanistan has hailed the counterpart Sartaj Aziz in Islamabad. The Afghan delegation was led by Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani, who was accompanied by Masoom Stanekzai, Acting Defence Minister and Rahmatullah Nabil, Director General of Afghan National Directorate of Security and others. The two sides asserted on need to broader security cooperation, peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan and displayed earnest interest in security matters – as usual deemed a part of rhetoric as working mechanism is shun is suspicion.

Afghanistan is certainly to go with softer stance, and make any way Pakistan bring Taliban on the table of negotiation to wind up the decade long bloodshed. A great number of people questions the standing of Taliban after the demise of its de facto leader Mullah Omar and ask why dead straw be enlivened? Islamabad being asked by Afghan government too deems the peace talk is reinstated with the succeeding insurgent leader could materialize peace. The truth about long lasting peace is quite intermingled to be ascertained; provided Taliban owing to exercise a foreign agenda may not integrate well in Afghan society and can not furnish peace at any cost.

The subject of Taliban if not permanently resolved will let Af-Pak relation suffer endless restrains. The rational administration of Taliban into the nascent democratic system of Afghanistan might stem their relationship from neighborly into brotherly ties. The primary requisite is the exercise of common endeavors for countering terrorism and for enduring peace and stability in Afghanistan; building people contact; students exchange programs; free trade agreement.

Indian-Afghan Friendship

By Dilawar Sherzai

15th August is the day when India celebrates its Independence Day. On the same day, in 1947, it got completely free from the control of the British Empire as a result of partition of Indian Subcontinent. This day consequently resulted in an India that got its own government, ruled by its own people and made its own constitution. It thus started its slow journey towards a democratic and secular country and today it is considered one of the largest democracies of the world.

India has made some remarkable achievements since its Independence both in political and economic spheres. Apart from being one of the greatest democracies, it is also considered a giant economy in Asia. India's special emphasis on economic development and growth has enabled it to achieve the current position. And, it has endeavored to follow the same intentions in its regional ties as well. Particularly, in its relations with Afghanistan, India has always pursued economic development, political stability and peace and tranquility.

Afghanistan is one of the countries that have been suffering from the evils of war and instability. It has always required that the international community and the regional countries should support it so that it can stand on its own. However, mostly the other countries have made Afghanistan their battle ground and used it for their own interests. India, on the other hand has always strived to guide its support for Afghanistan's stability.

People of Afghanistan also consider India as its friend. The public opinion in Afghanistan is highly in support of greater Indian influence in the country, and it is because of the fact that through most part of its relation with Afghanistan, India has been a true friend.

After the overthrow of the Taliban, India established diplomatic relations with the newly established democratic government, provided aid and participated in the reconstruction efforts. India has provided USD 650-750 million in humanitarian and economic aid, which makes it the largest provider of aid to Afghanistan in the region. India's support and collaboration are mostly in the areas of rebuilding of air links, power plants and investing in health and education sectors as well as helping to train Afghan civil servants, diplomats and police. India has also keen interest in the development of supply lines of electricity, oil and natural gas. And, also providing scholarships to Afghan Students.

The Indian Army's Border Roads Organisation constructed a major road in 2009 in the remote province of Nimroz, which connected Delaram to Zaranj. This has proved to be a reliable alternative route for the duty-free movement of goods through the Chabahar port in Iran to Afghanistan. One of India's key strategies in Afghanistan is to build up transportation links that can help Afghan economy's transportation links.

During Hamid Karzai's visit to India in April 2006, three memorandums of understanding (MOUs) for strengthening cooperation in the fields of rural development, education and standardisation between the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and Afghan National Standardisation Authority were signed between Afghanistan and India. An agreement providing USD 50 million to promote bilateral businesses between Afghanistan and India was also signed during the visit of the Afghan

Foreign Minister Dr. Spanta, between 29 June – 1 July in 2006. During the same year, India raised its aid package to Afghanistan from USD150 million to USD 750 million.

During the 15th SAARC summit in Colombo, India pledged another USD 450 million alongside a further USD 750 million already pledged for ongoing and forthcoming projects. In August 2008, former President Hamid Karzai visited New Delhi. This visit further strengthened bilateral relations, and Prime Minister Singh pledged further aid for Afghanistan. India's pledge to rebuild Afghanistan reached a total of US\$2 billion in May 2011 after Manmohan Singh visited Kabul for a two-day visit.

India seeks to expand its economic presence in Afghanistan in the post withdrawal era. In particular, it wants to improve transport connectivity and economic collaboration with countries in Central and South Asia. More such projects are likely to come up, which includes setting up Iron ore mines, a 6 MTPA steel plant (by SAIL – Steel Authority of India Limited), an 800 MW power plant, Hydro-electric power projects, transmission lines, roads etc. In short, India has played a significant role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process in Afghanistan. India's extensive developmental assistance programme, which equals around USD 2 billion, is an indicator of its abiding commitment to peace, tranquility and prosperity in Afghanistan during this critical juncture of security and governance transition. This makes India one of the leading donor nations to Afghanistan, and by far the largest among the regional countries. India seems to believe that development of Afghanistan requires reliable and lasting investment in Afghanistan that can help it exploit its natural resource properly. Therefore, India stands at the forefront of the promotion of investment in Afghanistan and a consortium of public and private Indian companies has been selected to make one of the largest investments in the country's mining sector, in the Hajigak iron ore reserves.

India also realizes the fact that there can be stability in Afghanistan only if all the major actors and countries have a stake in its stability, development and growth. Realizing this India has been increasing efforts to attract regional and trans-regional investment into Afghanistan that provides a reliable alternative to the dominant narrative of extremism and offers job opportunities to its population, by initiating events like the Delhi Investment Summit on Afghanistan in June 2012. Recognizing that the region holds the key to peace in Afghanistan, India has an important role in confidence building measures in the region in accordance to the Istanbul Process.

It also helped initiate a dialogue on Afghanistan through different platforms like the Afghanistan-India-US trilateral and the Afghanistan-India-Iran trilateral platforms that seek to bring together international partners with disparate worldviews to follow the common goal of securing peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. India also expressed its assistance to international cooperation on Afghanistan at the UN and at various international conferences that are focused on the future of Afghanistan, including the seminal Tokyo Developmental Conference in July 2012. India's support for Afghanistan is of immense importance and the people of Afghanistan also realize this fact and they wish that India should keep its assistance continue until it is able to stand on its own.

Dilawar Sherzai is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at email.urya@gmail.com

China-Pak Economic Corridor: Benefits for Afghanistan

By Akhtar Munir

China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a comprehensive development programme which would play a crucial role in improving the economic and strategic environment of the region. The project links Pakistan's Gwadar Port to China's north-western region of Xinjiang through highways, motorways and gas pipelines. The Corridor is of immense significance not only for Pakistan and China but also for other regional countries, in terms of economic and social development, particularly Afghanistan. The CPEC also connects China to Europe and Middle East through Pakistan. The implementation of the project would bring economic revolution as well as change the fate of the regional countries.

As an immediate neighbor, sharing a long border with Pakistan, Afghanistan will, indeed, be a major beneficiary of the economic corridor as its completion will also contribute to the economic prosperity of Afghanistan. Pakistan wants to see Afghanistan a peaceful and prosperous country and is making efforts to improve road connectivity with Afghanistan as both the countries have shared future and goals. In this article, I would like to explain how Afghanistan can be a major beneficiary of CPEC particularly its two alignments. The western alignment of the corridor which originates from Gwadar and runs through Khuzdar, Zhob and finally reaches Islamabad via D.I. Khan. In fact, the western alignment will have an additional connectivity to link Afghanistan through Chaman. This route will provide an easy and short access to Afghanistan to reach to the sea port of Gwadar which is almost 600 kilometer shorter than the existing transit route being used by the traders and people of Afghanistan. This link will tremendously help facilitating and promoting trade between the two neighboring countries as well as reducing travelling time. It is worth-stating here that the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) has already completed 502 kilometer length of the 870 km western alignment connecting Gwadar with other parts of the country.

Like the western alignment, the eastern alignment of the corridor will also improve road connectivity between Afghanistan and Pakistan. This section of the corridor will run from Karachi to Lahore and onward to Islamabad while passing through internal Sindh and parts of southern Punjab. The eastern alignment will pass through the motorways starting from Karachi to Lahore (work on the Karachi-Lahore Motorway has already been commenced) and onward to Islamabad and Abbottabad. The completion of the motorways' network will help to shorten the distance as well as reduce travelling time between the two neighboring countries. Besides Afghanistan, businessmen and traders from Central Asian states will also benefit from the corridor as they can easily export their goods to Middle East and European Countries through Gwadar Port. Apart from improving road connectivity, China-Pak Economic

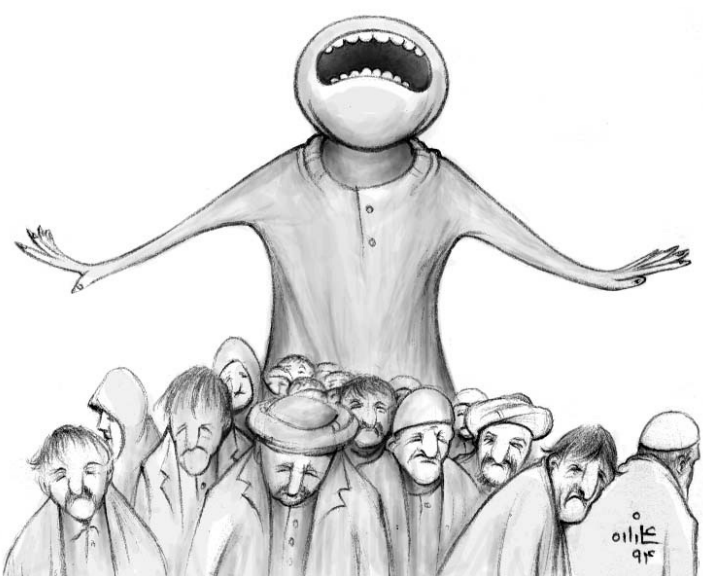
Corridor will also generate economic opportunities as well as play a vital role in economic integration of the region and countries like Iran and Central Asian States will be able to benefit from this project. The corridor is, hopefully, destined to bring rapid industrialization as well as greater investment to Pakistan which would have certainly healthy impact on Afghan economy. The Afghan businessmen and traders as well as general public will be in position to capitalize upon the emerging economic opportunities as a result of materialization of the corridor. CPEC has a greater regional and economic value as it would encourage other regional countries including Central Asian States to follow suit by entering into similar arrangement with China. The project has enormous potential to reshape the economic outlook of the regional countries.

Improving road connectivity and infrastructure development in Afghanistan are the major priorities of Pakistan. In this regard, Pakistan has undertaken a number of projects including 75Km Torkham-Jalalabad Road and 46 km road between Peshawar and Torkham. The Peshawar-Torkham road has almost been completed whereas the second lane of Jalalabad-Torkham road will, hopefully, be completed within a year. In order to further facilitate Afghan transit trade and boost Pak-Afghan trade, Pakistan has constructed two roads leading from D.I. Khan to Angoor Adda and Ghulam Khan linking Paktika and Khost provinces of Afghanistan respectively. These strategic trade links, built by Pakistan, will enormously facilitate the trade and transit links between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Apart from the above-mentioned roads, plans are afoot to construct motorway between Kabul and Peshawar and the homework on this project has already started. Similarly, laying Railway lines between Peshawar and Jalalabad and Chaman and Spin Boldak is also the priority of Government of Pakistan. The completion of these projects, in the years ahead, would tremendously contribute towards the social and economic prosperity of Afghanistan. In addition to the road infrastructure, Pakistan has been playing active role in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan and has built hospitals and educational institutions. Pakistan completed these projects despite its own financial problems as the war on terror has inflicted US\$110 billion losses on Pakistan's economy. The construction of these projects reflects the sincere endeavours made by Pakistan for the rebuilding of Afghanistan. It also shows the high degree of importance being attached by Pakistan to its ties with Afghanistan.

In view of the emerging favourable economic predicament, both neighboring countries are required to further strengthen their ties and capitalize on the economic opportunities to be generated by the China-Pak Economic Corridor. It is high time that both sides need to join hands to work together for economic development as well as make determined efforts to overcome the challenges of militancy, terrorism and social and economic impoverishment being confronted by the two countries.

The writer is a Press Counselor in Pakistan's Embassy, Kabul, and can be reached at Email: infokabul@yahoo.com



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.