

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



August 15, 2018

Ghazni Attack: A fatal Intelligence Failure

Ghazni is a strategically important center straddling the main highway linking Kabul with the south of the country. The attack on Ghazni is the most serious blow struck by the Taliban since they came close to overrunning the western city of Farah in May.

What objectives Taliban pursues in Ghazni Attack

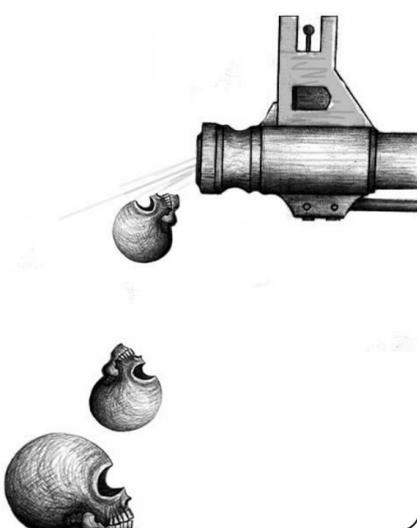
Taliban intends its terrorist activities to have an emotional impact on the target audience, causing it to act in a manner that furthers the group's objectives. Military experts hold that terrorist operations generally are categorized in terms of their associated goals. These goals traditionally are divided into five categories: recognition, coercion, intimidation, provocation, and insurgency support. The objective that Taliban pursue from Ghazni attack is mainly focused on provocation aiming to force government security forces to take repressive action against the general populace. Taliban targeted the critical infrastructures, popular or high-profile individuals, or important facilities for further provocations. And the terrorist group wants to demonstrate the weakness of the Afghan government at the verge of the peace talks.

What Terrorist Tactics Uses Taliban

Taliban, as a terrorist group has used different tactics in the past including: hijackings, kidnappings, bombings, assassinations, armed assaults, and barricade-hostage incidents. According to the current situation they use bombings, assassinations, and armed assaults which are less risky and generally require less organizational capabilities. Taliban by employing these tactics tends to accomplish the following goals: Create a climate of fear in among the civilians through a sustained campaign of violence; it also wants to negatively affect Peace process that sees as against its interests or its sponsors interests; and eliminate specific individuals or groups in the province that pose threats to them due to public influence they have among the people.

Security analysts argue that attaining the terrorist organization's goals depends on receiving adequate information for planning and executing an operation. They emphasize that the Eidul Fitr ceasefire, has been misused by the terrorist group of Taliban; first, many of the armed Taliban came to the cities including, Kabul, Ghazni, Herat, Mazar e Sharif and they stayed in the cities to carry out terrorist attacks; As such, this opportunity served them to access to the detailed information for planning and executing its attacks on Ghazni and other major cities of Afghanistan. Also, the Taliban could access to the information on the movements of key personnel, or the identity and vulnerabilities of critical facilities. Security analysts insist that Afghan ANSF and especially the NDS shall take the necessary measures to deny terrorists the critical information that they require planning an attack, and shall implement security countermeasures that are commensurate with the assessed level of risk.

Terrorist operations require detailed information for planning and executing an attack. The terrorist groups spend a lot of time and money to have access to intelligence to produce intelligence required for an attack. Though, the Eidul-Fitr short term ceasefire was a strategic breakthrough in the Afghan long standing conflict, it provided the Taliban a unique opportunity to have access to the information they require for an attack in different parts of Afghanistan. In addition, Afghan ANSF and especially the NDS failed to take the necessary measures to track the armed Taliban who entered into the cities during the ceasefire and remained for planning and carrying out terrorist attacks. This is one of the causes of mounting attacks by the Taliban after the ceasefire, causing huge human and material casualties to the Afghan people and government. The main lesson of the short terms ceasefires to Afghanistan is that, we shall pursue reaching a sustainable peace through different chillness and at the same time shall not create conducive conditions to the terrorist groups to misuse our good will and base their military offensives on such initiatives. To do this, the NDS plays the key role to deny information to the terrorist groups.



How does China View Its Neighboring Countries?

By Huazhong Tu, Andi Luo & Wenxian Zha

China altogether has 21 neighboring countries, including 14 continental neighbors and 7 maritime neighbors. It has the most neighboring countries in the world. Comparing with the U.S. and other countries, China is in face of the most complicated international environment. It not only has the giant neighbor like Russia which has a population of 144.3 million, but also has the small neighbor like Bhutan which merely has a population of 817,726. At the same time, China is a country with vast land territory area covering 9.6 million square kilometers and maritime territory area covering approximately 3 million square kilometers, even much larger than the total territory area of 44 countries and regions in Europe.

In another word, for 34 provincial-level administrative districts in China, nearly every single provincial-level administrative district approximates to a medium European country in terms of territory area, economic scale and population size. Such enormous size also propels neighboring countries to generate extremely sophisticated affection towards China. On the one hand, some neighbouring countries expect China to mobilize the development of their own countries; while on the other hand, some neighbouring countries are afraid of the negative influences imposed by China.

In recent years, some media in neighboring countries claim that China might turn their home lands into a colony to seize raw materials and dump industrial products. In the long run, these neighboring countries would turn more and more impoverished and have to attach themselves to China in the end.

To be sure, this concern is not unreasonable since every country would prudently reflect on the relation with neighboring countries from the stance of diplomatic relations. From the perspective of these neighboring countries, they worry whether an unamiable China would threaten their own development. In turn, China has such concern whether an unamiable neighboring country would threaten its own development as well.

U.S. only has two neighboring countries, namely Canada and Mexico. Out of this reason, the national relation confronted by U.S. seems to be very simple. The prosperous, stable and friendly neighboring country - Canada becomes the firmest partner of U.S., but in contrast, the poor, turbulent and hostile neighboring country - Mexico turns to be a troublemaker which constantly transports drugs and refugees to U.S. It is not hard to understand that U.S. prefers neighbors like Canada instead of Mexico. Trump Administration even plans to build a wall along the border with Mexico so as to prevent all troubles outside of the wall. As proved by past historical experience, all countries aspire to have a prosperous, stable and friendly neighboring country. Like U.S., China also expects to have a neighboring country like Canada, to mutually helps each other for joint development. Indeed, since the reform and opening-up in China as of 1978, China has received considerable invest-

ment from developed economic entities such as U.S., Japan, South Korea and Singapore and in the meantime learned advanced technologies and management concepts. China exactly obtains high-speed economic development on this basis and develops to be the world's second largest economic entity in the world till 2010. Such brilliant achievements attained by China totally benefit from the interaction with developed countries and the constant learning of advanced technologies and management experience.

It is worth mentioning here that among overall 21 neighboring countries of China, in addition to few developed countries, most of them remain to be developing countries faced with tough development issues. In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping raised the Belt and Road Initiative(BRI) for the first time in which he expressed the expectation for sharing the development experience of China with other countries in the world, in particular surrounding neighboring countries. However, some media in the neighboring countries hold the opinion that China conspires to turn other countries into its own colonies through the BRI. Obviously, this opinion runs counter to the national interests of China.

From the perspective of economics, any rational person would make favorable decisions. By the same token, any rational country would also make favorable decisions instead of unfavorable ones. As stated above, to have 21 prosperous, stable and friendly neighboring countries could push forward the development of China, but to have 21 poor, turbulent and hostile neighboring countries could cause huge losses to China.

Now that the decision-makers of China are the cleverest elites chosen from hundreds of thousands of and even millions of Chinese people, how could they make stupid decisions which might turn their neighboring countries much poorer, more turbulent and hostile?

Afghanistan is a geographically beautiful country full of its own culture, customs and traditions, both China and Afghanistan have good wishes for common development. Hence, China regards Afghanistan as the most precious neighbor, and a prosperous, stable and friendly Afghanistan meets the national interest of China. Eventually, China does not have the power or intention to colonize any country including Afghanistan. In the past over one hundred years, Chinese people had witnessed poverty and backwardness and desired to lead an affluent and stable life. As a consequence, the development of China also requests a peaceful and stable surrounding environment.

The development of China is actually inseparable from the assistance of its neighboring countries including Afghanistan. Simultaneously, China is willing to share its own development experience with neighboring countries and devoting to building this area into the model of world peace and prosperity.

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Afghanistan: Achievements and Challenges 2018

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Any assessment of where Afghanistan stands today needs to be put into its historical context. In doing so, it should be recalled that even before the advent of the present conflict, Afghanistan had been one of the least developed countries in the world. The country's development was hindered by competing Russian and British empires for more than two centuries.

The imperial tensions and rivalry effectively reduced Afghanistan to one of the most isolated buffer states in the world. But before the colonial era, Afghanistan had been the roundabout of the ancient Silk Road, indeed, its gateway to the north, south, east, and west for commercial and civilizational interactions.

To fast forward, despite Afghanistan's imposed isolation under colonial influence, much of what the country had managed to achieve in state-building and sustainable development was destroyed in the 1980s and 1990s. Hence, Afghans' hard-earned gains of the past 17 years in the areas of security, governance and democracy, and development remain a work in progress.

This means that international aid efforts will have to continue in Afghanistan, until Afghans firmly stand on their own. The transformation of Afghanistan — from statelessness and anarchy under the Taliban to where the country stands today — has helped maintain regional stability and global peace. And this has had direct and indirect dividends for the homeland security of Afghanistan's allies and partners in the region and beyond.

In taking stock of Afghanistan's challenges, increasing insecurity takes center stage. However, in recent years, the Afghan army and police forces have bravely continued to fight against terrorism and organized crime but it was lots of ups downs. Hundreds of civilians including children and women have killed which were unprecedented since 2001.

what became clearer for people that it is not a civil war among Afghans but a war over Afghanistan where more than a dozen regional and transnational terrorist groups have converged to undo the country's gains of the past 17 years, to weaken and topple the Afghan state, and to exploit the Afghan soil for launching attacks against targets in the region and beyond.

The Taliban, which operate from certain safe sanctuaries and enjoy institutional support from regional and international intelligence network, provide an enabling operational environment for all other terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

Without this overarching umbrella and operational platform, foreign militants could hardly gain a foothold to destabilize Afghanistan, the region, and the world at large. These intertwined networks of terror, violence, and death — maintained by state-sponsorship of terrorism — drive drug production in Afghanistan.

The Taliban alone make some \$200 million off the illicit drug business. This sum finances their terrorist activities across Afghanistan. A deepening symbiotic relationship between terrorism and drug production is responsible for about 87 percent increase in opium production in Afghanistan. It also accounts thousands of civilian and non-civilian casualties all across the country.

Moreover, terrorists targeting places of worship, religious leaders, and worshippers.

As Afghan forces battle these intertwined regional and transnational security and criminal threats, the message of the Afghan government to all armed groups, including the Taliban, is clear: They will not win in the battlefield so long as they continue fighting.

But they can choose to accept Afghan government's offer to negotiate a political settlement for peace. Indeed, peace is not simply what the Afghan people desire but need to thrive toward a secure future in peaceful and prosperous co-existence with all their near and far neighbors.

Achieving a just peace in Afghanistan is impossible without institutionalization of good governance and rule of law, based on the country's progressive constitution. At the heart of this endeavor — to secure the future of its youthful population with 70 percent under the age of 25 — is to fight and eliminate endemic corruption.

Corruption weakens Afghanistan's nascent state and empowers its enemy. It is the mother of all threats to Afghanistan's stabilization and sustainable development.

Sustainable development is intertwined with security and democratic governance. In the Afghan context, human security and protective security are mutually reinforcing one another. Investment in one delivers dividends for the rest and vice versa.

However, in parallel to these and other poverty reduction efforts, the Afghan government has continued to help develop the private sector to create sustainable jobs and drive growth. For example, president has Ghani identified the 11 top constraints facing the private sector in Afghanistan. So far, better business licensing has been advanced; punitive tax penalties abolished; and public-private partnerships legislation developed. And much more is being done to provide the right environment for attracting and retaining domestic and foreign investment in Afghanistan's virgin markets.

The above summary of achievements and challenges sheds light on the way forward for the next years. The root cause of insecurity — which hampers Afghanistan's state-building process and sustainable development — lies outside of the country and imposed on Afghan nation with the help of internal elements.

The immense potential of South Asia and Central Asia for economic growth has been taken hostage by a known regional state-actor and its proxies. The latter is exploited to destabilize Afghanistan and to enable in the country an operational environment for transnational terrorist networks.

Indeed, the success of the government for securing sustainable peace in Afghanistan would hinge on regional cooperation, broader international support and active diplomacy of the government. That is why international efforts in support of peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan must focus on helping Afghanistan-led mechanisms and initiatives for regional security and development cooperation deliver tangible results.

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