

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



February 01, 2018

Trump's New Strategy for Afghanistan: A Recipe for Solution

The Taliban started a new round of attacks and suicide bombings in the Capital and other parts of Afghanistan, causing huge humanitarian casualties. The majority of the victims of International Continental Hotel, and the attack with ambulance packed with explosives in one of the crowded Areas of Kabul were the civilians. Targeting the civilians is not an act by accident, it is a strategic approach by the terrorist groups to the war with the Afghan government and its international community who support it. On the other hand, it is masterminded by ISI to convey this message to the USA, if you put us on pressure we can do the same with you through our proxy groups. It is more than one and half decade that the Afghan government and the USA have made any measures to end the Afghan war through negotiations with the Taliban. However, this strategy has failed. That's why Trump announced the US does not want to negotiate with Taliban any more since the terrorist group just has kept its pace with intensifying the war and targeting the civilians intentionally. And Ghani the Afghan president, in an act of strategic alignment with the US strategy announced that "we will defeat Taliban in the battle fields". This new approach seems logical, it is the rule of the game of the war, and a sustainable peace just can be achieved through strong war to defeat the enemy and put it under such a pressure that leaves no room for it, except accepting your conditions or at least sit at the negotiation table for a win-win talk.

The Key Pieces of the Trumps' Afghanistan Strategy

Shifting from a time-based approach to one based on conditions; this tactic not only disappoints the terrorist groups but also ensures the Afghan people and government that they will not be left alone once more. Based on this, there will be no room left for the terrorist groups that can change once more Afghanistan to their safe hideout because the US and its allies will stay with the Afghan people until when the terrorist groups and their regional supporters cannot threaten Afghanistan and other countries, especially the US, anymore. Integrating American power-diplomatic, economic and military; this ensures a comprehensive approach to war and mobilizing all instruments to achieve one strategic goal; as a result there will be synergy among the diplomatic, economic and military tools and will paralyse the enemies. In other words, if in a war strategy, one of these aspects is neglected, the enemy may sustain; e.g. if the economic aspect is not considered in the war strategy, and you just take measures using diplomatic and military apparatuses in the war, the enemy may find a way to sustain through access to economic opportunities.

Changing the US Approach in dealing with Pakistan; this shift is the most strategic shift of the US approach in the war on terror in Afghanistan. The main cause and roots of the war is not in Afghanistan, but outside it; in Pakistan. It has been an issue that the Afghan governments have always tried to satisfy the international community that the terrorist groups are trained, given safe heavens and provided intelligence support from Pakistan. However, this was not appreciated by the international community so far. By this strategic shift of the US approach, Pakistan either shall put an end to its proxy war in Afghanistan and not to support the terrorist groups in the country or shall face tough reactions of the US. Afghanistan may not reach to a sustainable peace unless Pakistan puts an end to its interference in the country.

Develop strategic partnership with India; the US required to review its approach to India-Pak in terms of the US geopolitical context. The US has spent more than \$31 billion on military aid supports to Pakistan and it has spent the money on supporting the terrorist groups in the region. And as Trump puts it: "We can no longer be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond". The US required to have a true ally in Afghanistan, an ally to be committed to civilization, order and to peace, and it is not Pakistan.

Persistence in Strategy implementation; the remarks of Trump on postponing peace talks with the Taliban is just the right strategic approach to the group. Talking with the terrorist groups amid escalating their offensives not only has no strategic benefits but strategic failure; it only encourages the terrorist group and its regional supporter to go along with their atrocities and massacring the civilians as a strategy to make the Afghan government and the USA to surrender to their conservative and terrorist logics.

The New US Strategy for Afghanistan is the strategic opportunity for Afghanistan and the region to align themselves with it to put an end to terrorism in the region. It is a positive step that the US rejected negotiations with the Taliban and at the same time the Afghan president said we will defeat the Taliban in the battlefields. It not only creates synergy among the Afghan and US strategies but also gives a strong message to the Taliban and other terrorist groups and their supporters that they cannot win the war through escalating their offensives and massacring the people indiscriminately.



History of Indonesia: Experiences and lessons for Afghanistan

By Zia Danish

Relationships of Afghanistan and Indonesia have been enhancing during the last three years of National Unity Government (NUG), the visit of president Ghani to Indonesia and that of a team of delegates from High Peace Council of Afghanistan to the country as well as visit of the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs to Kabul and, eventually, this time visit of Indonesian President to Afghanistan, altogether imply that the political ties of both countries are significantly strengthening and expanding rapidly. After visiting Indonesia both, the president and the High Peace Council of Afghanistan, have always emphasized that the country's experiences, facilities and cooperation are key to Afghanistan's peace creation, political stability and economic development. Considering the promise of Indonesia for taking part in peace building process of Afghanistan as well as the recent visit of the country's president to Afghanistan, people in Afghanistan are hopefully waiting to see how Indonesia with its relevant experiences facilitate the peace building and sustainably in Afghanistan.

What type of country is Indonesia?

Indonesia, with more than 250 million populations, is located in eastern Asia which is the fourth most populous country in the world and the first most populous country in the Islamic world. It is said that more than 700 languages are spoken in Indonesia, and numerous tribes and ethnicities practicing six different religions live equally and peacefully in the country. Indonesia's diversity is spread in more than 17,000 islands and thirty-three provinces. Indonesia is also the top economic power in the South East Asia.

Indonesia is one of the countries that have been attacked several times by colonialism, separatism, and many others. It had been struggling with widespread poverty and corruption. The country has declared its independence in 1945, which was finally recognized as independent country in 1949. Having a powerful economy with its ethnic diversity who live peacefully despite their distinct orientation, as well as its moderate ideologies are the key factors which have led the country to a better position among the international communities. According to international evaluating institutes such as the IMF, the World Bank, Goldman Sachs, the Economist and others, Indonesia is ranked as a potential top-ranking economy of the world in the near future. And according to World Bank, by 2025, the country will be among the six emerging economies of the world, which will create half of global economic growth. Another implication to this change is Indonesia's membership in Group 20 (which has had significant effects beyond its borders). In addition the Group 7 has invited Indonesia -representing Southeast Asia with its economic potential -to cooperate in managing the world economy. According to Goldman Sachs, Indonesian GDP will reach \$7 trillion in 2050, reaching the seventh rank in the world. Furthermore the country will be elevated from 14th rank in 2006 to 6th in 2050 based on GDP growth rate, while, its GDP per capita will reach \$22,395 in 2050. Indonesia's successes and achievements in creating a moderate society with different ethnic groups living peacefully despite having different languages and religions portrays an image which illustrate that "Indonesia is a country with hundreds of subcultures while in the Middle East there are 30 countries with a single culture". The religious peacefulness and religious nationalism is very nicely stated in the speeches of Minister of Religious Affairs of the government "We are Indonesians who are accidentally Muslims, not just Muslims who are by chance Indonesians", he said. Providing religious education beyond the cultivation of extremism, tolerating non-Islamic thoughts and beliefs along with the dominant Islamic culture; presenting a unique pattern of religious harmony and saying no to religious warfare, are the lessons that this country has for offering to Islamic world.

Indonesian Lessons for Afghanistan

Indonesia's recent eras had a lot of similarities with Afghanistan such as the history of occupation by foreign countries, civil wars, widespread and organized corruption, rich natural resources and widespread poverty, separatism, regional interventions, and so on.

But today, Indonesia is one of the most successful countries in the world and among Islamic countries, which is growing rapidly and becoming a role model.

1. The fight against administrative corruption: Once Indonesia was one of the most corrupt countries in the world, widespread bribery was prevalent in various parts of the country, however, at the moment the country has succeeded in substantially restoring its global reputation by its achievements in struggling against administrative corruption that achieved a better position in the world ranking for Indonesia. Afghanistan can benefit from experience and lessons learnt of Indonesia in its anti-corruption programs. 2. A successful battle with extremism and terrorism: in Bali the crimes committed by terrorists, in which 200 people were killed in 2002, is still considered an unforgettable incident. Nevertheless Indonesia had repeatedly witnessed terrorist acts and attacks, though, the success of the country's anti-terrorism forces -who were also trained by United States counterparts- have effectively secured the 17,000 scattered islands as vast as 5,000,000 km². And this is a precious experience that security agencies can utilize in Afghanistan's counter terrorism struggles.

3. Employment and poverty reduction: Indonesia succeeded at struggle against poverty after a series of corrective programs in the second period of Suharto's rule, which greatly reduced unemployment. For over twenty years, the country had a successful struggle with poverty, and that experience for a country like Afghanistan (with similarities in widespread poverty and extensive unemployment) would be full of positive benefits for poverty reduction and employment generation.

4. Ethno-cultural diversity and National Unity: In Indonesia more than 700 languages are spoken as well as above 300 different ethnicities live together with six different religions and their government's motto is "Unity in diversity". The success of this country in creating such a peaceful life has many lessons for Afghanistan with its diversity in ethnicities, languages, and subcultures. 5. Internal conflicts due to foreign interference: Indonesia also has unpleasant experiences of internal conflicts stemming from regional and trans-regional interference. Afghanistan also has a similar experience that has been plaguing the country for more than forty years, now Indonesia can help Afghanistan by sharing its experience of how it has been able to manage the interferences and curbed their interventions to its internal affairs.

6. Economic Growth: Indonesia has a profound and effective experience in economic growth and has gone through many dooms and blooms since the mid-1990s and ultimately succeeded in achieving a stable and dynamic economy. This country can share its experiences in overcoming economic crises caused by insecurity, foreign intervention, poverty etc. with Afghanistan. 7. Peace and stability: Indonesia has been in conflict with some parts of the country for more than thirty years and eventually managed to achieve a lasting peace. At this time, the country has, even, offered a lasting peace plan for peace and stability of South Asian region. The country is considered to be one of the countries in the world which has valuable experiences in creating peace. Afghanistan is precisely looking for this experience and, thus, has called on the country to help in bring about lasting peace.

Indonesia as a Muslim country, having gone through the similar destiny, of course, has many other things to offer for Afghanistan including experiences in mining, agriculture, education, technical progress, etc.

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Taliban's Atrocious Attacks are against all Principles

By Hujjatullah Zia

Saturday's attack in the heart of Kabul, which killed 103 and wounded 235 people, was a gross violation of human rights and humanitarian law. This attack reveals the ugly face of the Taliban, who target combatant and non-combatants indiscriminately regardless of religious tenets, ethical code, and international principles.

Contrary to their claims, the Taliban have constantly spilled the blood of civilians and violated international instruments across the country. Their dogmatic ideology stems from Salafism, Wahhabism, and Dubandism which are of the most radical schools of thought. Hence, exercising a radical mindset, the Taliban show no respect to humanity. They kill people without a tinge of guilt. After all, it is really painful to see that the Taliban trample upon the rights of people under the cloak of religion.

Reeling from the death of their high-ranking members, the Taliban seek to target civilians, including women and children, with the intention put the government under pressure in order to concession to their regional or trans regional supporters. The wave of terrorist attacks in recent days reflects two facts. First, the Taliban have sustained heavy casualties by Afghan soldiers and seek to react through targeting civilians, which is against humanitarian law. Second, the Saturday's attack, which was claimed by the Taliban, near the building of High Peace Council (HPC) shows their lukewarm response to peace talks. The Taliban have persistently held out against negotiation of peace especially after the appointment of their radical leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada. Therefore, they have never stopped violence and bloodshed.

I have frequently pointed out in my commentaries that the Taliban outfit shows no tendency towards peace talks and optimism for a fruitful talk is baseless. The deadly acts of the Taliban fighters reflect that they are masterminding attacks behind the scene rather than preparing for talks. To ponder over the issue, the Taliban are not able to reconcile their dogmatic worldview and fundamental ideology with amicable negotiation, which roots in tolerance and humanity.

The Saturday's suicide attack carried out by the Taliban has been widely condemned. Declaring national day of mourning for Sunday, with flags flying at half-mast, the presidential palace condemned the attack in the strongest possible term. Meanwhile, Tadamichi Yamamoto, the chief of the United Nations mission in Afghanistan, denounced the attack as "nothing short of an atrocity" and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. Likewise, US President Donald Trump called for "decisive action" against the Taliban over the assault as other international leaders

also condemned the attack. "I condemn the despicable car bombing attack in Kabul today," Trump said, "that has left scores of innocent civilians dead and hundreds injured." He added, "The Taliban's cruelty will not prevail. The United States is committed to a secure Afghanistan that is free from terrorists who would target Americans, our allies, and anyone who does not share their wicked ideology."

Although the Taliban's acts of violence have been frequently condemned at domestic and international levels, this has not decreased insurgency. Whether or not their acts are denounced, the Taliban will resort to any tactics to obtain their sinister objectives.

On the other side, the repeated condemnation carries weight neither for the militants nor for Afghan people. That is to say, it neither mitigates insurgency nor alleviates the pain and anguish of the nation.

The Taliban have inflicted heavy casualties upon Afghan nation. According to reports, 1,372 civilians were killed and 2,360 were wounded in the country within the last eight months of 2017. Data from the UN shows that 10 civilians were killed every day on average over the first nine months of 2017.

Carrying out deadly attacks against soldiers and civilians, the Taliban believe to leave no room for talks. They have played foul game in the past and continue to do so. Although, reports said that a three-member Taliban's delegation traveled to Islamabad from its Qatar political office to consider the peace possibility, it seems no more than a deceptive game that the Taliban have ever played. Their fundamental ideology and political objectives are against peace and stability. Furthermore, the escalated militancy shows Taliban's tendency towards violence and bloodshed.

In brief, the Taliban are not able to reconcile their warped mind with amicable talks and will continue their insurgency across the country. The series of attacks and suicide bombings carried out indiscriminately against Afghan nation suggest that the Taliban seek revenge for sustaining heavy casualties in the battlefields.

The Taliban's organized attacks in the heart of Kabul indicate the weak intelligence of the government. To combat terrorism effectively, the state has to reinforce its intelligence and change the tactics of war since the traditional method is not effective enough. Meanwhile, the ongoing political tension between officials, which is most likely to leave a vacuum for a shared resolution in counterinsurgency, should come to an end. Otherwise, insurgency will continue unabated.

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