

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



January 25, 2016

## US's Shift of Approach to the Afghan Conflict

The Islamic State group is going to remain a key challenge in the upcoming years for the Afghan National Security Forces who already have been engaged in a bloody battle with the Taliban. The Islamic State group came to prominence in eastern Afghanistan in 2015, and is pursuing ambitious goals for the so-called Khorasan province of the group's state. The rise of the Islamic State group has further compounded the security deterioration in Afghanistan. In an attempt to curb the newly emerging militant group, the US has reportedly authorized its forces in Afghanistan to carry out operations against the Islamic State group in the country. This is while the US had ended its combat mission in Afghanistan at the end of 2014 and the current role of its troops in Afghanistan were to advise and assist Afghan forces in the campaign against the insurgent groups.

According to US officials, the authorization from the White House is meant that American troops stationed in Afghanistan could operate against any groups who threatens interests of the United States. The authorization comes months after Gen. John Campbell, US commander in Afghanistan, warned of the Islamic State's efforts to establish a regional base for the group in Afghanistan. The commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan also had recently said that he would ask US President Barack Obama to maintain the highest number of US troops currently serving as part of the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.

The recent White House authorization of US troops to carry out operations against the Islamic State group in Afghanistan is in fact a comeback for the US military in the war efforts against a newly emerging threat in Afghanistan. While the US was gradually disengaging from the conflict in Afghanistan, it was a low-tuned shift of policy from the US, allowing its troops to remain engaged in combat missions in the country, along with providing support to the Afghan security forces. Earlier, the government forces battling the Taliban in Kunduz province were backed by US aerial firepower, which proved crucial for repelling the Taliban offensive. In another front, as the Afghan forces were battling to repulse the Taliban offensive in Helmand province, British and US forces provided crucial support for the Afghan forces to repel the Taliban offensive.

These cases of engagement of US and NATO troops in combat roles in Afghanistan suggest the inevitability of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission to do more than what is defined as non-combat role in the ongoing conflict in the country. The US finds itself in an inevitable position for dislodging the Islamic State in Afghanistan. Gen. Campbell's consideration of keeping level of troops as high as possible indicate growing concerns of US military commanders over the rise of the Islamic State group in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Despite the common beliefs that the Islamic State has no ground of influence in Afghanistan, the group is adapt at recruiting disgruntled Taliban members and attract those extremist elements who are disillusioned with the Taliban. The Islamic State would remain a potential danger for the Afghanistan-Pakistan region as it focuses on attracting disgruntled members of the Taliban and using horrific war methods that are popular to vast majority of the jihadists.

The United States need to prop up the government in Kabul until Afghanistan develops sufficient defense capacity in the fight against the militant groups. The US and its allies in NATO can help Afghanistan survive against the more complicated and heightened Taliban and IS offensives by providing sustained support for the coming years. Afghanistan still has a long way to have a fully functional air force to provide crucial airpower for the ground forces engaged in fighting with the Taliban and the Islamic State. Until then, Afghan forces will remain relying on aerial supports from the Resolute Support Mission. Therefore, it is crucially important for the Afghan forces to be provided with limited but forceful aerial support from the Resolute Support mission.

On the other hand, Afghanistan needs to develop capabilities of its own air force. The US has stepped up efforts to train personnel of the Afghan fledgling air force and equip it with more warplanes. The national unity government has been actively pursuing international support for boosting the anti-insurgency campaign by strengthening Afghanistan's air force. It has been seeking support of the US and other allies such as India to further develop Afghanistan's air force. The recent assistances from India and the US will have impacts for the next year battle against the Taliban. It would boost air dominance as well as morale of the government forces in the fight against the insurgent groups.

The prospect of the war for the coming years is uncertain. Despite the ongoing peace efforts, increase of violence in the coming years is highly likely. The Afghan government needs to be prepared for a heightened conflict. The shift of approach by the US in providing more robust support for Afghan forces is promising. The Afghan government should do more to persuade the US and NATO to step up supporting the Afghan forces in the battle against the insurgency.



## Afghanistan - A Peacemaker Government with Warmonger Enemies

By Hujjatullah Zia

With the appointment of Mullah Akhtar Mansour as the Taliban's leader and emergence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), an escalation surfaced in militancy and terror across the country. Afghan nation has passed a bloody year and a large number of civilians and police lost their lives or sustained injuries. As a result, US officials said that at least 7,000 Afghan security force members have been killed between January 2015 and the beginning of December. Similarly, total civilian deaths and injuries in the first quarter of 2015 followed the record high levels of 2014. Between January 01 and March 31, UNAMA documented 1,810 civilian casualties. The Taliban carried out several high-profile attacks in recent months. In December, the militant group launched an attack on the strategic district of Sangin. It later seized and blew up the police headquarters and governor's compound. And in September, the Taliban briefly overran the northern Afghan city of Kunduz, in one of their biggest victories since 2001.

The insurgency has not decreased despite the hot discussion about resuming reconciliation process and locals' rights to life and liberty are widely trampled upon. Moreover, the freedom of thought and expression comes under threat by the Taliban insurgents and they seek to influence the media. Reportedly, a car-bomb attacked a bus carrying journalists working for an Afghan news channel on Wednesday and left 7 dead and 25 injured behind. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. It is said that Tolo News vehicle was specifically targeted and the victims were its staff.

In October, the Taliban designated Tolo News and 1 TV, another Afghan news outlet, "military objectives" and accused them of spreading propaganda. The Afghan outlets had reported allegations that Taliban fighters had committed rapes in the battle for Kunduz, among other abuses. Abuse was also reported by Western media, citing the Afghan government and a report by an Afghan-rights group.

The Taliban's suicide attacks continue in spite of the fact that Afghan, Pakistani, Chinese and US officials have met for talks, last week, aimed at establishing a roadmap for peace between Afghanistan and the Taliban. However, the Taliban, who are divided by factional infighting, did not attend the talks.

A statement issued at the end of the meeting said that "all four countries underscored the importance of bringing an end to the conflict in Afghanistan".

It further added that "The participants emphasized the immediate need for direct talks between the government of Afghanistan and representatives of Taliban groups in a peace process that aims to preserve Afghanistan's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity."

On the other hand, the US State Department spokesman John

Kirby has said that there are some challenges in the Afghan-led reconciliation process with the Taliban. He did not point out the challenge but said that Afghan leaders are aware of them. "But we applaud the continued efforts that they have put in to get it going. And as we've said before, we stand willing to support that process as appropriate, but it must be Afghan-led. That's the only way this is going to be successful."

It is believed that the Taliban's splinter group and ISIL and many other terrorist networks, including the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), seek to act as "distracters" through increasing terrorist attacks so as to create tension between Kabul and Islamabad. For instance, Pakistan's Chief of the Army Staff Gen Raheel Sharif claimed that the terrorist attack on Bacha Khan University - which left at least 21 people, including students, a faculty member and security guards dead - was orchestrated from Afghanistan by members of TTP group. According to a Pakistani medium, strike was claimed by TTP Geedar group's commander Aurangzaib alias Khalifa Umar Ameer Naray, who was also involved in attacks on Peshawar's Army Public School in December 2014 and Air Force's Badabher camp in September last year.

The fact is that the peace talk has always encountered a challenge in one way or another. In other words, militancy and tension increase as soon as the reconciliation process is planned to be initiated. Most probably, those militant groups, who are disregarded in the talk, will intensify their attacks to narrow the opportunity for diplomatic way.

Currently, the ISIL insurgents will also pose threat to reconciliation process via carrying out attack under the name of Taliban since a number of the Taliban members pledged allegiance to this group - as it stoked sectarian tension in recent months by kidnapping and beheading members of ethnic minority group without claiming the responsibility.

Despite all the challenges, it is said that the official initiative involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States is due to hold its third meeting in Islamabad on February 6. The meetings do not include Taliban representatives, but aim to lay the groundwork for an eventual dialogue between militants and the Afghan government.

Afghanistan should urge the Taliban militants to cease militancy and give up killing the innocent civilians if they show any tendency towards peace. In another item, the Taliban's terrorist attacks should not be ignored as a peace offering by the government. It is simply said, "If you want peace, prepare for war". Besides seeking peace, the government should intensify the soldiers and show military backlash against the terrorist attacks which target the nation, be it from the Taliban, ISIL or any other terrorist network.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at [zia\\_hujjat@yahoo.com](mailto:zia_hujjat@yahoo.com)

## Dealing Accordingly!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

This world is full of people who are of varying nature and qualities and thus we expect that we will be dealt with both in good and bad manners and thus with this fact in mind, we are not hurt so much when someone cheats us or deals us cruelly. You might have noticed the children or teenagers, due to the lack of experience about the realities of world and mostly due to the less knowledge about the practices being undertaken in the real life, react very strongly when they see or experience any unjust practice or conduct. However, with the passage of time, we learn that world is not a place that we had drawn in our dreams. When such a perception is made in our mind that we can expect to meet and experience people of both good and bad nature, we make ourselves ready to accept it as a reality and when we face any situation that is contrary to our expectations or imaginations, we accept it without having much feeling about it. This was one side of the picture. When we proceed to the other, we face a situation that is the exact opposite of the other. It is a situation when we expect that people who are perceived to be just in the society, would practice justice and equality and would never resort to something that should be against their image and reputation. But when we see that a person being taken to be the flag-holder of equality and justice, either commits injustice or lets the injustice prevail or simply does not do anything to avoid any injustice, people who support justice and equality are greatly disappointed and saddened.

Such a situation cannot be restricted to any specific place or time. Be it an educational institute, or a workplace of different employees or any other, there have always been events and occasions when the good-doers were not praised or appreciated for what they did or the evil-doers were not punished or discouraged. This might be present in the annals of history as well and would definitely be repeated in the future as well. In a school setup, there are students who try all their best to come up to the expectations; of teachers, school administration, parents, and of course, of their own ideal images. This is not a kind of task that should be achieved very easily. I have witnessed many students who suffer a lot to attain the levels of perfection that are set as standards either by the society, or by their teachers and parents or by their gut generalization of the things. This is not related to the academic achievement but mostly related to showing polite behavior with the teachers and fellow students. No doubt, there are many practices that encourage a student to attain the good qualities mentioned earlier but unfortunately such students are not always supported or encouraged to attain such qualities. When this thing is not done, many complex situations can come into existence. The closer study of such circumstances or situations bring into light many discrepancies that can be harmful not to the thoughts and efforts of a good-doer but also to the general image of the masses in following in any such path in future. At times, a classroom or the school setup is hijacked by the students who believe in intimidating others; be it teachers, fellow students or the school administration, by their harsh and rude behaviors. This all starts when they see that their bad or inap-

propriate behaviors are not going to be checked or corrected by anyone or when they feel that they can draw more attention of others by their negative approach. Mostly, such students are found to be incapable of getting the desired attention by healthy and positive participation or competition. The repeated experience assures them that their strategy has turned more fruitful and thus they deliberately continue following their path, though it might be stinging their conscience as well.

Most drastic effect of any such situation is on the students who are not only well behaving but also like the same environment to be prevalent in the classroom or in their surroundings. It is always a painful view to see that a person is left to feel the pain just because he or she believes in the politeness and that a person with his impolite behavior is getting more attention. Then a doubtful thought creeps in their minds that if they were wrong and the one who is doing wrong is on the right path. In such circumstances, many things can happen. One is that, the student who believes in good practices will get very much disappointed by whatever is happening around. Secondly, it might result in the discouragement of those who believed in goodness or who wanted to acquire and stand still with such noble traits. In such circumstances, it has been noticed that one really becomes indifferent to whatever is happening in his surroundings. In some worst scenarios, good students also quit their trademark traits and adopt the behavior that could have never been expected of them. The above detailed scenario and reactions can be observed in any group of humans where the good doers are ignored or discouraged and the trick of wrongdoers sweep the show. We can say that the evil hijacks the angel. It is thus necessary that either it is school, an organization or any other place of interaction of human beings, the equality should be implemented and practiced. The good qualities should be praised and rewarded while the bad qualities should be dealt with properly so that those who are good should not be ashamed of their conduct and thoughts and the evil thoughts or practices should not be allowed to flourish. It is the reason why Islam also stresses a lot for justice. It promises rewards to the good deeds but at the same time, wrong deeds are also threatened of the painful punishments. According to Islamic teachings, if justice was not practiced, the evil will flourish and the good deeds will shrink and this will result in the gradual decline in the society where influence of evil forces will keep multiplying with the passage of time. But the best solution to this problem can be attained by making few things clear. Goodness is a quality that should be enough to lift up the spirits of its owner, no matter if it is appreciated and praised by others or not. Once a person comes to realize this fact, he would definitely come out of circle of disappointment. But it is necessary that our youngsters and teenagers, especially the students, who are not in position to understand this by their own, should be given counseling and shown this beautiful side of the picture. We always keep a concept dear that we accept after understanding it.

Muhammad Rasool Shah is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at [muhammadrasoolshah@gmail.com](mailto:muhammadrasoolshah@gmail.com)



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

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: [outlookafghanistan@gmail.com](mailto:outlookafghanistan@gmail.com)

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

[www.outlookafghanistan.net](http://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.