

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



March 26, 2015

US-Afghanistan Relation Revitalized

Subsequent to resuming office of presidency, the two, head of state Ghani and the head of government Abdullah have made frequent visits to different countries in the bid to draw their politico-economical support. At present the two premiers are hailed in United States of America, a potential state chasing the terrorists and supporting democracy in the nascent democratic state of Afghanistan. During his six-day trip, president Ghani met his US counterpart Barak Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, other administrative officials including congressmen, the Institute of Peace and Atlantic Council the following days.

The two heads of state are expected to discuss scores of issues ranging from strategic, security, diplomatic, and economic relationship and plan to pace the US troop withdrawal. One of the core issue that earned vital importance earlier during the talks was making the US slow down its troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. Serving the request put forth by president Ghani, the US President Obama later in joint White House news conference announced his decision to keep its current 9,800-strong force there until the end of the year, without a change in end mission planned in 2016. Some of the officials are with the view that President Obama's decision to maintain troop levels in Afghanistan till the end of 2015 is partly designed to encourage American counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan, including the Central Intelligence Agency's ability to conduct secret drone strikes and other paramilitary operations from United States military bases.

Earlier the United States was due to reduce its 10,000 troops to 5,500 by December, but that number was expected to be reassessed. It was said that post US withdrawal 10,000 troops would be left behind to look after security of US embassy and officials. It's also said that the U.S. would keep the Kandahar Airbase in southern Afghanistan and Jalalabad Airbase in eastern Afghanistan open till the end 2015, which was earlier planned to be closed. Jalalabad has been the primary base used by the C.I.A. to conduct drone strikes in the tribal areas of Pakistan including the edge-cut assassination of Osama bin Laden in Abbotabad earlier. Since then the drone operation were relocated in Jalalabad. The trip is also seen as an important step toward mending relations between the United States and Afghanistan, which was ruined towards the end of former president Hamid Karzai's ten-year rule. Ghani needs to draw US undeterred support in its fight against the Taliban and other insurgent groups, including an Islamic State affiliate, which he fears is finding a foothold in Afghanistan. In the meanwhile, the president displayed an exceptional resolve to defeat the evil of terrorism and remain committed do away with terrorism which is seemingly affirming its foothold. It's therefore; Ghani urged a slower drawdown, warning about the security environment and emergence of ISIS-affiliated fighters.

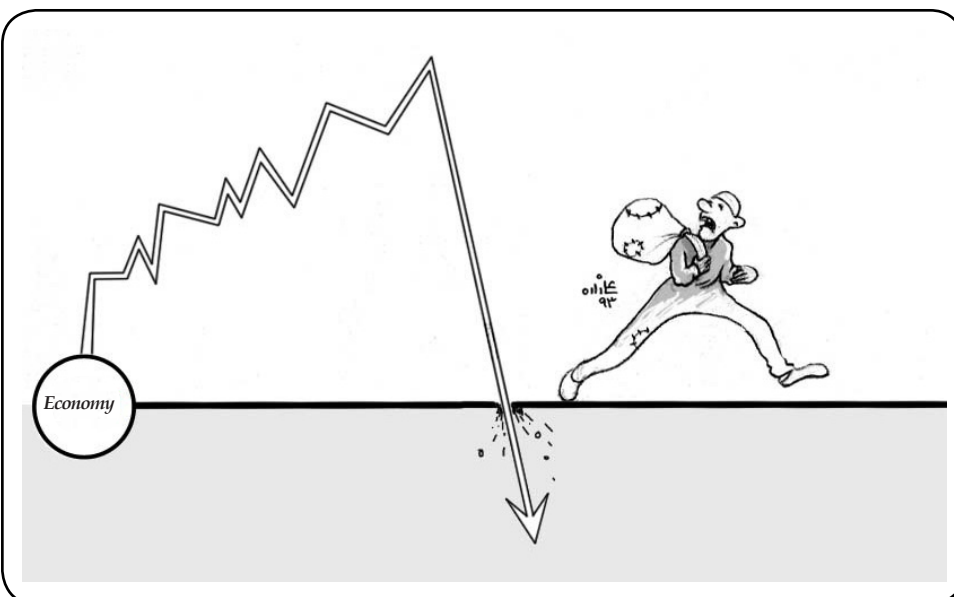
Another problem Afghanistan faces needs to be put to the table is the persistent financial assistance its huge military needs. US have reserved its status of being major donor country, whose financial support has helped Afghanistan run its socio-political and economical matters.

Afghanistan at the moment fears about military operation in tribal areas of Pakistan that pushes a major series of global terrorist networks is the concern expressed by president Ghani. In order to do away with this very problem Afghanistan should increase its surveillance at the borders areas and movements of individual should be closely checked. The US can help Afghanistan in getting out of the said emerging woes of infiltrating Taliban and ISIS by assisting and advising Afghan forces. Both the states Afghanistan and Pakistan shouldn't let terrorist use its border areas for vested interest of other.

It is assumed, in the light of nexus found between Afghan Taliban and Pakistan, she could play vital role in persuading Taliban for peace talks. As witnessed Pakistan accordingly is playing its due part in carrying forth talks given certain rounds of informal proposition surfaced earlier. The objective is to make the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan more open and more secure and then help "connect South Asia to Central Asia," as Mr. Ghani put it during his first trip to Pakistan last fall.

The U.S. government, for its part, has already taken steps to facilitate negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban. In addition to announcing the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, it has sanctioned the names of some Taliban leaders from a Bush administration-era blacklist. It has supported differentiating the U.N. sanctions that apply to Al Qaeda from those that apply to the Taliban, so as to allow the lifting of travel bans on members of the Taliban. Washington has also transferred some Taliban leaders from the detention center at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to Qatar.

The U.S. government must exercise its influence in the greater interest of peaceful and politically durable Afghanistan by leaving no stone unturned in bringing all the factions on the table of negotiations. Afghanistan has to make it certain, all aid military civilian aids received will descend to reorganization of democratic institutions and development of every part of far stretched land. The urban and rural centers equally given priority will turn Afghanistan into a dignified and indomitable country in the world. Afghanistan and US ties are reinforced after "Enduring Strategic partnership Agreement" was established in 2012, that laid the foundation of long-lasting relationship post US draw down. It should be ascertained the two partners will fully utilize every single opportunity getting the war-torn Afghanistan rid of some if not all problems.



Flexibility in US Troops Withdrawal

By Dilawar Sherzai

US President Barack Obama has accepted to retain the current troop level of 9,800 in Afghanistan throughout the year 2015. Earlier, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had requested for flexibility in the drawdown for better preparations of Afghan troops to face the security challenges, during his and the Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah's visit to US.

The drawdown of US troops from Afghanistan is a very important phase in the history and Afghanistan must make sure that it is completely ready to tackle the situation after the drawdown is completed. The US at the same time must make sure that all the gains that have been acquired after so many sacrifices are not lost because of speedy drawdown. Ultimately, the drawdown has to be completed and the Afghan security forces have to take the responsibility of the security of the country themselves but careful consideration in this regard is highly important. A statement from the White House after the talks between the two leaders said, "This flexibility reflects the re-invigorated partnership, which is aimed at making Afghanistan secure and preventing it from being used to launch terrorist attacks." If left alone, there are possibilities that Afghanistan may once again fall a victim to terrorism. President Ashraf Ghani said as a response, "Much binds us together, and the flexibility that has been provided for 2015 will be used to accelerate reforms to ensure that the Afghan security forces are much better led, equipped, trained, and are focused on their fundamental mission."

The only way through which Afghanistan can guarantee peace is the peace talks with Taliban. It is really vital that Afghan government must make serious efforts in this regard. War cannot go on indefinitely and will benefit no one at the end. The need of time, therefore, is a successful reconciliation process with Taliban provided that they end violence, break ties with international terrorist groups and accept Afghanistan's constitution, including the protection of the rights of women and minorities. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has currently taken tangible steps in this regard and he has been successful in rebuilding ties with Pakistan to ensure better opportunities regarding the talks with Taliban. President Obama during the talks with Afghan President also emphasized the importance of continued efforts for the peace talks and also appreciated Afghan-Pakistan dialogue aimed at building trust and producing tangible progress in the peace process and improving the security situation in the region.

The role of regional countries in this regard is also of immense importance. China, in this regard, has taken clear stance and seems ready to support Afghanistan in the process. India, on the other hand, has been emphasizing for peace and tranquility in Afghanistan. Afghanistan, therefore, has to seek the support

of the regional countries and must ensure that it is successful in its efforts as any sort of negligence in this regard may prove fatal. President Obama also endorsed efforts to deepen the Heart of Asia Process and expressed appreciation to China for hosting the October 2014 summit and to Pakistan for hosting the next meeting this year.

Apart from pursuing the security situation and the peace efforts there are many other factors as well that have to be emphasized by Afghan government so that it is able to lead Afghanistan towards a better future. It has to be understood that the democratization of the political system in Afghanistan is still immature and needs to go a long way before it can reach to a reliable position from where it can start a journey towards real democracy that can penetrate to the grass root level and can deal with the diversity existing in the country.

Furthermore, there are concerns and ambiguities regarding the untamed corruption in the country that has been paralyzing the governance system and has been hindering the way of the funds and supports from international community to be spent for the welfare and betterment of the common people of Afghanistan. Rather, it has been transferring the money, in some way or the other to those who, directly or indirectly support Taliban and terrorist networks in the country. International community in this regard has shown concerns on various occasions but tangible measures that can really introduce strong system of accountability are yet to be introduced.

The economic system has not reached to the level of independence and largely relies on the presence of the foreign troops in some way or the other and serious investment and economic activities are yet to achieve confidence because of shaky situation of markets and the law and order situation.

In the meanwhile, keeping in mind the concerns regarding the capabilities of Afghan security forces and the strengthening terrorist networks it would be a great challenge to maintain peace and tranquility in the country.

Definitely, the war in Afghanistan has to be ended decisively and that is what the circumstances in Afghanistan and the neighboring countries are demanding. Both the eradication of terrorism and political and economic stability of country have to be made sure before the war is concluded.

Yes, there have been many sacrifices given in this war so far, both in terms of human life and resources, but with a little more effort the outcome of the war can be quite different from what it can turn into if left in the way it is. All these efforts should be concluded with the victory of peace loving forces against the terror networks and the success in establishing a strong democratic government in Afghanistan where the common people have the basic requirements of life.

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Our Patriarchal System

By Hujjatullah Zia

The day will come when man will recognize woman as his peer, not only at the fireside, but in councils of the nation. Then, and not until then, will there be the perfect comradeship, the ideal union between the genders that shall result in the highest development of the race." - Susan B. Anthony

The solar year of 1393 was ended with the appalling death of Farkhunda, a 27-year-old woman who was lynched by angry mob near the Shah-e Doh Shamshira shrine and mosque in Kabul. The desert court led to public protests and drew strong condemnation from the parliamentarians. Her tragic murder, which reflected the flagrant violation of a woman's rights and dignity, hurt the feelings of the nation. To avoid rhetoric, we bid farewell to the solar year of 1393 violently - with killing a young woman in cold blood.

The vulnerability of Afghan women is beyond doubt. Their life is fraught with manifold problems. The traditional frames of mind and cultural taboos curtail their freedoms to a large extent. A large number of girls and women are not allowed to take part in social activities - especially in the Taliban-dominated areas. Women and girls are supposed to abide by the traditions rule their villages. After all, to the unmitigated chagrin of Afghan women, the Afghanistan's presidential election in the solar year of 1393 was not a panacea for their bleeding wounds. They fell victim to gang violence and rape constantly as ever before. In other words, the macabre stories and clichéd phrases of violence made repeated headlines on national and international newspapers - and continue up to now. They still appear to be treated as pariah in traditional villages.

Needless to say, the Taliban had sprayed corrosive acid on the faces of Afghan girls on the way to their schools and razed the girls' schools to the ground. The dictatorial regime of Taliban entitled women to no rights and dignity and considered them a creature totally subject to the man's desires. However, their terrorist acts yet target Afghan women. To put it succinctly, the Taliban's ragtag group makes attempt to impose their warp beliefs on Afghans, especially on women, at the barrel of gun. What if rather than being healed, the wounds in women's hearts become aggravated in the next year?

The solar year of 1393 was marked with the tragic death of Farkhunda, which has reflected violence against Afghan women. However, it is feared that violence against women will also continue in the current year. Women should not suffer men's fractious attitudes, mental and physical tortures anymore. The religious guidelines and country's law should be practiced upon and the patriarchal system should end so that women's rights and dignity be held in respect. The Constitution of Af-

ghanistan states in article 22 as, "Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law." Moreover, article 24 asserts, "Liberty is the natural right of human beings. This right has no limits unless affecting others freedoms as well as the public interest, which shall be regulated by law. Liberty and human dignity are inviolable. The state shall respect and protect liberty as well as human dignity." The government should enforce the law strictly and prosecute the perpetrators.

The erosion of religious values, absence of humanity and decline of moral standards are the great tragedies in our social and individual life. We are deep in cruelty and vice. The current violence taking place against women demonstrates our real characters. Can you ever imagine shedding the blood of one whom you lived with under the same roof for long time?

Radical feminists believe that men are responsible for women's exploitation. Analysis of patriarchy - systemic dominance of men over women - is the main tendency of this type of feminism. They believe that patriarchy is a nationwide phenomenon throughout the cultures and times. Radical feminists consider family as a basic source of atrocity and cruelty in the society. They state that men exploit women by making them work free of charge. Moreover, they believe that men are a setback for women to reach power in the society. Firestone, one of the first writers of radical feminist who used to live in 19th century, states that men have control over the role of women in reproduction and training of children. Furthermore, radical feminists believe that women cannot get rid of sexual cruelties and atrocities by gradual changes and amendment. According to them, patriarchy is a systemic phenomenon; gender equality is possible only by demolishing the system of patriarchy. They believe that those social and cultural norms which reiterate the slender figures and sympathetic attitudes of women, aim to extend their inferiority and obedience. According to this type of feminism, objectifying women through media, models and advertisements change women to sexual objects with the intention of amusing and pleasing men.

I do agree with the radical feminists. Afghan women pass their times in the kitchen without a pittance - and sometimes what they receive in return is violence and vituperation. In addition, women suffer not only in Afghanistan but also in Pakistan, India, America, etc. in one way or another. So, "patriarchy is a nationwide phenomenon" and this system should be abolished for the comfort of women - especially in our country.

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