

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

# Daily Outlook

## AFGHANISTAN

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### Kabul-Islamabad Expanding Security Cooperation

Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS) and the Pakistani intelligence agency, ISI, have signed a memorandum on expansion of intelligence cooperation between the two spy agencies. Haseeb Sediqi, the spokesman of the NDS, told a press conference on Monday May 18, 2015 that the agreement is aimed at expanding cooperation between the two countries on intelligence and security matters. According to the spokesman, the agreement has clearly defined threats for both countries, specifying "all terrorist and extremist groups that are considered as threats and are active in various areas". The agreement between Afghanistan's NDS and Pakistan's ISI is coming after months of heightened political and diplomatic efforts between the two countries to chart a future course for the Afghan peace efforts.

The agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan is viewed as milestone in security cooperation between the two countries two tackles common threats. With the government of Afghanistan struggling to kick-start peace talks with Taliban, the remarkable agreement of cooperation in security and intelligence areas is a sign of firm resolve from both countries to expand cooperation that is ultimately aimed at establishing close relations between the two countries. In last fourteen years, Afghanistan and Pakistan had had largely strained relations which rendered both sides unable of establishing relations based on mutual interests. However, since the National Unity Government (NUG) came to power in Afghanistan, the two countries moved to rapidly improve relations and commit to cooperate on resuming peace negotiations with the Taliban.

Afghanistan and Pakistan's security is deeply intertwined, and the two countries cannot guarantee security in their respective countries without an extensive and long term security partnership. The shared border between the two countries is largely porous and extremists freely cross the border as they routinely move back and forth to the other side destabilizing both countries. An intelligence partnership between the two countries will provide both sides to monitor the shared border more closely and control crossing of the extremist elements. Tight control of the shared border will considerably limit ability of the Taliban and insurgent groups to recruit militants and train them in their safe havens in tribal areas of Pakistan.

Also the government of Afghanistan can expand its control on Taliban financial resources and the drugs smuggling which directly profits the insurgent groups. The only viable way to fight the Taliban is to keep military pressures along with peace efforts. Robust and successful military operations against the insurgent groups could be possible only if the government of Afghanistan strengthens its surveillance on activities of the militant groups not only inside the country but also in the areas of the shared border with Pakistan. Pakistan can greatly help Afghanistan in the war against the insurgency if the two countries manage to set the differences that have failed them so far to stabilize both countries and end the militancy.

Pakistan is believed to have an extensive control on the militant group Taliban, and its intelligence cooperation can help Afghanistan to keep pressures on Taliban and other insurgent groups and force them to come to table of negotiations. The insurgent groups would have no safe havens on both sides of the shared border if the two agencies cooperate and share intelligence in whereabouts of the insurgent groups and the safe havens of the militants on both sides of the border. The Taliban is believed to have training camps in Pakistan and from where they send fighters in Afghanistan and destabilize the country. If the Afghan and Pakistani spy agencies manage to expand cooperation and share intelligence, Afghanistan will be able to eliminate most of sources of threats that is posed to the country.

There are mixed reactions to the agreement between Afghan and Pakistani intelligence agencies. Many believe that it would help the two countries to further cooperation in tackling with the insurgent groups that are operating in both countries. However, there are also widespread skepticisms in Afghanistan towards the agreement signed between the two spy agencies. Many MPs angrily expressed their anger at the agreement on Monday calling for impeachment of the Director of the NDS. This suggests the fears and skepticisms that exist regarding more extensive security and intelligence cooperation between the two nations as so far there is no concrete progress achieved by Kabul and Islamabad for peace in Afghanistan.

The agreement is a welcome development between the two countries, and is a sign of rapid improvement of bilateral relations. However, the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan need to work more sincerely for combating the insurgency and brining peace in both countries. Only tangible progress on this regard would appease the public regarding the nature of the expanded relations between the two countries. Public trust is key for both governments to succeed in their efforts to end the conflict in Afghanistan and defeat militancy and insurgency in both countries. The key factor for success of any agreement between the two neighbors on security is improvement of political relations between the countries.

Much of the credit for diffusing mistrusts in Afghanistan-Pakistan relations goes to the National Unity government and particularly President Ashraf Ghani's regional policies. However, security and intelligence agencies of both countries should realize the public skepticisms towards the expanding security cooperation between Kabul and Islamabad. What is important in this agreement is that Pakistan should respect Afghanistan's national sovereignty and security. For the mutual relations and stability in both countries, Kabul and Islamabad should cooperate honestly and genuinely to expand security partnership in the long term.



## “Transition Doesn’t Mean Disengagement”

By Dilawar Sharzai

The weary war against terrorism that was launched after the incident of 9/11, brought with itself different sorts of influences and impacts on the lives of people in Afghanistan, South Asian region and U.S. in particular and the world in general. The war, though has done much to topple down the Al-Qaida favoring reign of Taliban and has been able to target the mastermind of the incidents of 9/11 - Osama Bin Laden, it has brought with itself a pile of controversies. Even, bearing a lot of medals on its chest, this war is considered to have proved very much lethal in some other ways. The resources that have been used in this war have not been considered to have hit the bull's eye and the very reason for which the war was started is yet to be achieved even after almost 14 years, when the involved nations of the world seem to be reluctant to continue the war and decided to drag it towards a conclusion.

The growing graph of civilian casualties caused majorly by Taliban raids have been a matter of great concern for Afghans. At the same time, deep concerns on the reconciliation program with Taliban and withdrawal of international troops are present in the minds of Afghans.

The most important pretexts to the war were to put an end to the terrorism in Afghanistan and help it build strong political and economic systems so that it can guarantee its survival on the modern concept of democracy. Both the pretexts are yet to be realized to full extent and the international security forces led by U.S. troops have already announced that they would be withdrawn completely till the end of 2016. Neither the terrorist networks have been eradicated from the region, nor the political and economic systems in Afghanistan are standing on strong footings that can be left alone without much attention and support from international community.

The phenomenon of terrorism has the capacity to grow into strong position from where it is today and can really threaten the region and the world as a whole. Further, this phenomenon is no more an issue only in Afghanistan and has reached to the neighboring countries as well. Pakistan, in this regard, can be named specially. The rise of terrorism in Pakistan has had close connections with the socio-political situation in Afghanistan and even if the situation in Afghanistan is made better in terms of peace and tranquility it is bound to be effected by the changes of phenomenon of terrorism in neighboring Pakistan unless it is dealt as a regional matter. Moreover, the growing insecurity in Pakistan is a threat by itself, as well.

On the other hand 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. Further, any political agreement with Taliban still remains unattainable and the ongoing peace process also do not seem very much optimistic. Include to all these concerns and ambiguities 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.

Though international community has promised that it will be supporting the country even after withdrawal, the economic conditions in the developed nations of the world do not suggest so. They have been going through economic crisis and in few years to come would have to concentrate on their economies to a large extent to compensate for the crisis. But, whether the international community is going to keep supporting Afghanistan financially and militarily largely depends on the decision of the U.S. authorities. Currently, U.S. has been making sure that it would remain engaged in Afghanistan even after 2016.

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. This war has to be concluded with the victory of peace loving forces against the terror networks, and this is the ethical demand of the war, if there happens to be any ethics in war.

The public trust and support are vital for attaining victory in Afghanistan. The government of Afghanistan and West should work to bring betterment in security condition so that they can boost the level of public trust and support.

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## Prisoner of the Veil

By Hujjatullah Zia

Afghan women were susceptible to social and political harms throughout the history. They underwent great sufferings in war and peace. Their rights and dignity were violated in one way or another. They were restricted within the four walls, bereft of their basic rights, on the grounds of being female. Under the tribal rule, Afghan women were subjugated to the wishes of their male partners. Girls fell victim to honor killings.

Under the Taliban, girls were coerced to abandon school. They were treated as mere pariah and had to suffer under more radical ideology. Women were considered as being inherently devilish - that tempts men to succumb to sin. In other words, their feminine attraction, the Taliban believed, was a threat to man's faith - a highly ridiculous frame of mind, isn't it?

They were pummeled severely in case of neglecting the Taliban's rule such as coming out without wearing burqa. The women's freedom was curtailed to a large extent. Education was suitable only for men and the society did not need, as they believed, female doctors, engineers, teachers, etc. But the question that where to take a female patient, remained unanswered. Since women were undervalued in their regime, it was easy for them to answer that let them die.

There is a half documentary film under the name of "Journey to Kandahar" which reflects the problems of Afghan women under the Taliban, played by an Iranian actress Nelofer Pazira and her stage name is Nafas. In this film, Nafas returns to Afghanistan after receiving a letter from her sister, who was left behind when the family escaped, that she plans on committing suicide on the last solar eclipse of the 20th century.

As she enters Afghanistan, Nafas is told she must wear a burqa - the all-encompassing veil - to protect the honor of her male escort.

It becomes a symbol of the stifling oppression of women - the most invisible group of people in this "country without images" - and at the same times their defiance of this oppression. Hidden behind a woven muted green and pink burqa, Nafas, the sister from Canada, makes her way across the border with a family of refugees. When they are robbed by brigands and the family turns back, she decides to continue on her way, accompanied first by a young boy who was just expelled from a Qur'anic school, and then by an African American man, who has become disillusioned with the turn the country has taken under the Taliban.

As the film proceeds, Nafas learns more and more about the hardships women face under the Taliban, and even more so, how years of war have destroyed Afghan society. Her African

American guide, hidden behind a false beard, points out to her that the only technological progress allowed in the country is weaponry. As they wander the countryside, Nafas records her impressions into a portable tape recorder hidden beneath her veils. She sees children robbing corpses to survive, people fighting over artificial limbs that they might need in case they walk through a minefield and doctors who examine female patients from behind a curtain with a hole in it.

The journey to Kandahar must be completed within three days if Nafas is to rescue her sister, which gives the film an urgency that highlights the unbearable timelessness of Afghanistan - a country where time seems to have stopped.

Nafas falls sick along the way, and has to visit a doctor. Because men are not allowed to look at women who are not related to them, she must sit on the other side of a cloth partition from the doctor, who speaks to her through her child escort.

"Ask her what she has eaten," says the doctor. "What have you eaten?" asks the boy. "Tell her to put her mouth to the hole," says the doctor. "Put your mouth to the hole," repeats the boy.

The labored repetition dramatizes the absurdity of daily life in Afghanistan in a way in which straight reporting can rarely do.

In one of the most memorable scenes as it was mentioned, a group of one-legged landmine victims race on crutches to claim pairs of false legs that Red Cross helicopters have dropped from the sky. It could be from a Fellini film, yet it is quite likely to be real.

In one scene she joins a large group of women going to a wedding party, all wearing brightly-colored burqas.

The women may be faceless, but the veils themselves are strangely beautiful. By ordering women to be fully covered, the religious militias also never quite know what is underneath the veil.

But the audience is permitted to look inside: girls secretly apply lipstick and paint their nails; Nafas carries a tape-recorder; and a man uses the subterfuge to escape arrest.

Nafas is cleared by the Taliban patrol to continue, along with other members of the wedding party. In the end, Nafas is within sight of Kandahar at sunset, but she is now a prisoner of the veil.

All Afghan women were the prisoners of the veil during the Taliban's regime. Wearing burqa was considered obligatory for them. Their faces and identity had to be hid behind the veil for being female.

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