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Taliban’s Momentum Should be Reversed!

The Taliban’s momentum should be reversed. President Ashraf Ghani has communicated his speech in the joint session of the parliament on Monday was convincing enough for many who expected announcement of the progress of the government in the struggle against the Taliban and other militant groups. However, his apparent attempt to clarify the Taliban into two groups, the first one consisting of the radicalist Taliban, and the second one consisting of the moderate Taliban, is not enough. It is also necessary to clarify the issue by whom the government has enough determinant power to engage these groups. In particular, President Ghani should no more wait for the Taliban to come to the table of negotations, instead Afghan government should initiate the dialogue with the Afghan forces that are influential and moderate in the Taliban’s ranks. The Taliban should be invited by the government to talk to the talks and negotiate peace with the government. This is a key step in the process of reversing the Taliban’s momentum. If the Taliban are invited by the government to come to the talks and negotiate peace, it will be enough to stabilise the Taliban and its allies.

President Ghani’s speech was all about the measures that would be taken to neutralize the Taliban, and this would be achieved by implementing Afghan plans on dealing with terrorist groups including neutralizing their terrorist structures. He also challenged Pakistan by saying that the country should fully understand the challenge and take action against the elements of the Taliban in Pakistan.

As expected, President Ghani’s speech signaled the toughening of Afghan government’s stance on fighting the Taliban, especially for an unspecified period until another round of peace efforts—and other militant groups. But it was not an attempt to modify the previously established government stance against the Taliban and on the issues of political talks with the Taliban. However, the Afghan government, along with the Taliban, is in a key position in the peace talks with the Taliban. The toughest of cases were shown in a recent and promising announcement of the Afghan government’s cooperation on the situation in which a move by the Taliban was coming to the table of negotiations. In fact, al what he wanted to reveal was a temporary pause in the peace talks with the Taliban until a militarily weakened Taliban is back in a position that it is able to speak from a firm ground to negotiate with the Afghan government.

However, it was not enough for the Afghan government to have a temporary pause on the peace talks. In fact, there was too much on the side of the Afghan government that a long-term interest on the Taliban as the enemy of the Afghan government and the Afghan government’s alliance against the Taliban. Former President Hamid Karzai’s government released hundreds of Taliban prisoners to appease the Taliban. In this regard, Pakistan refused to join the peace process and the efforts of the Afghan government to stabilize the country as most of the released militants showed up on the battlegrounds against government forces and some even carried out attacks against Afghan government forces. The Afghan government’s continued cooperation with the Taliban, according to the former Afghan president, was that there would be no military strategy to stabilize the government. President Ghani himself carried the term ‘political’ oppositions with the Taliban with the aim to cleanse the Taliban and pave the way for bringing the group into the mainstream politics. However, his new stance on political talks with the Taliban is one of the major elements of the government’s new strategy. In the past, the government had a traditional approach to the parliamentary session by saying that some of the Taliban are murderers and the government would not seek peace talks with the Taliban. But now, the government is taking a new approach to the Taliban and other militant groups. In the process of establishing the government for future peace talks, it is very apparent that President Ghani is trying to derogate the former government’s position on the issue of political talks with the Taliban. He is also trying to bring about a new approach to the Taliban, which he says are the Taliban that wage war against Afghanistan and refuse to come to peace talks.

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President Ghani’s remarks suggest that he is not more waiting for the Taliban to come to the table of negotiations. Instead, he is now ready to engage the Taliban in a war of attrition. This strategy has been adopted by the former regime of the Taliban’s leader in the Afghan government’s foreign policy for the past two years. Last year, last year in the peace talks, the Afghan government’s foreign policy was not efficient, it was not enough to stabilize the government. President Ghani has come to the term ‘political’ oppositions with the Taliban with the aim to cleanse the Taliban and pave the way for bringing the group into the mainstream politics.