

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



July 05, 2015

The Need for Sustainable Kabul-Islamabad Relations

A recent border clash between Afghan and Pakistani forces on the shared border near Barmal district in Paktika province has come as a surprise incident amidst efforts to improve mutual relations between the two countries. According to media reports, the Afghan Foreign Ministry Affairs summoned Pakistani ambassador to Kabul to convey Afghanistan's protest over the incident which left one Afghan soldier dead and another wounded. Pakistan has also confirmed that two Pakistani soldiers were wounded in the border skirmish. The incident is coming while the two countries are trying to improve bilateral relations and boost cooperation over Afghanistan's peace talks with the Taliban. The border skirmish between the Afghan and Pakistani forces suggest that tensions arising from isolated security and cross-border incidents may affect the relations between the two countries at a time when there is need for enhanced cooperation between Kabul and Islamabad.

The border skirmish between Afghan and Pakistani forces is coming after remarkable improvement of relations between the two countries since formation of the National Unity Government in Afghanistan. Afghan and Pakistani forces had also engaged in border clashes and cross-border shelling in the past that had affected the relations between the two countries. However, the recent incident comes at a time of improved relations between Kabul and Islamabad. Despite the warning that the incident may damage bilateral relations, the two countries well realizes the need for sustainably improving relations and building on achievements made since last year. As in the past, cross-border incursions and other security issues are potentially harmful for the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the two countries need to remain committed to respecting each other's sovereignty and national interests.

There are unprecedented common threats to interests of both countries and to the two nations' commitment to improve ties and work for bringing peace and security in both countries. In recent months, the Islamic State group has been making inroads in Afghanistan, posing unprecedented threat to national security of the country. Islamabad also considers the Islamic State as a threat not only for Afghanistan but also for Pakistan's security and national interests. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan share a common ground on the need for fighting the newly emerging Islamic State threat. Afghanistan has made combating the Islamic State a top priority, establishing a dedicated elite unit under the country's National Directorate for Security to effectively combat the emerging threat. As a potential threat to security of both countries, the Islamic State group is promoting a new form of militancy and extremism in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Given the shared threat, Kabul and Islamabad need not to be deterred by unexpected challenges affecting the cooperative relations between the two countries.

Afghanistan has been facing a bold Taliban offensive in recent months. In recent months there have been intense fighting in northern and southern parts of the country and the Taliban has made gains in Jalriz district of Wardak, a province neighboring the capital. The Taliban launched their deadly spring offensive while Afghanistan and Pakistan had made considerable progresses in reaching a common ground over the peace efforts in Afghanistan. While the Afghan army and police forces have efficiently combated the Taliban in this seasonal fighting, a peace deal with the Taliban still requires cooperation from Pakistan. Given that Afghanistan and Pakistan has reached to a great extent a common ground for peace in Afghanistan, the two countries need to remain committed to working for not only resolving the Afghan conflict and bringing the Taliban to table of negotiations but also for bringing peace and security in both countries. Same as Afghanistan, Pakistan has suffered militancy and extremism, and the two countries need to sustainably work for peace in both countries.

The recent border skirmish between Afghan and Pakistani forces is coming as a test for the two countries' resolve and determination to sustainably improve relations and work together for resolving common threats. For sustainably improved relations, Pakistan needs to respect Afghanistan's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, while Afghanistan needs to realize that Islamabad's cooperation is key for bringing peace and stability in the country. Afghanistan and Pakistan has now a shared objective for long-term cooperation on mutually-benefiting issues including peace in Afghanistan. Kabul and Islamabad will be able to progress towards that objective only if they remain committed to improving bilateral relations and resolving challenges in the mutual relations.

There are increasing skepticisms in Afghanistan over Pakistan's commitment to its pledges for cooperating with the Afghan government over peace talks with the Taliban. There has been no concrete action from Islamabad in supporting the Afghan-led peace efforts. There are still optimism for a genuine will in Islamabad to help the peace efforts in Afghanistan. Islamabad has no option but to deliver on its promises for helping peace and stability in Afghanistan if it is serious in its declared friendly relations with Afghanistan. Since last year, Islamabad and Kabul have been able to manage low-level tensions arising from cross-border incidents; the two countries need to be so in the future as well. Isolated cross-border incidents not only damage the bilateral relations, but also it should help the two countries to reaffirm their determination for resolving mutual and common challenges.



War Waged for Political Dominance!

By Asmatyari

The piece of land we inhabit is characterized by bombings, ruthless killings, kidnapping, corruption, bad governance, administrative flaws and mass abduction. The brutality seems to have chain up unto complete annihilation of innocence -observing calm and indifferent to entire scenario. This is eventually referred to be era of vindictiveness -exploits the essence of development for peace that has turned a nightmare. The strength the anti-state elements have acquired marks the state of mercifulness we display -we are divided they are united. The innocent citizens get butchered, killed and dumped without anyone's prime concern. The miseries of ordinary masses do not end with ruthless killing or abduction of some individuals instead multiplies provided the bereaved family is left to suffer endlessly. The perception, hunger is human avengers is turned deception subsequent to beasts chasing madly innocent humans.

The establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) renders one of such deception, anchored on the blood of innocents and unarmed citizens. It is said that the throng of terrorists that stationed in Iraq and Syria from across the world, have surpassed the brutality of Al-Qaida; thus sent a shock impulse over the spine of many states, including the international community. It is to be drawn that we should demonstrate zero tolerance against the extremists and insurgents who are doing away piece of mind.

It is said that Daesh's quest for establishing Islamic Emarat has earned it adherents in Muslims countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan too. Finding the tale of brutality of this group going wild, many splintered Taliban group exploit the name to further their vested interest -some have already vowed to work for Daesh. The once militant outfits of Taliban and other splintered groups have vowed to fight the cause of the group, of international fame. In Afghanistan it is pulling its muscle to establish its rule in remote and loosely governed territories. There are many tales of atrocities hinting the physical presence of Daesh in this war torn land. The former spokesperson of Afghan Taliban, Zabihullah Mujahid along some other commanders has already shifted their allegiance.

Here some faction of Taliban have already responded to the call of Caliph of Muslims al-Baghdadi waging war against innocent civilians here in Afghanistan. Earlier, President Ghani confessed the threat looming over this land due to terror plots of IS fighters. This undoubtedly is an alarming sign for the state of Afghanistan, already sickened by recurrent attacks launched by local insurgents and militants. Moreover, Afghanistan undeniably serve as a fertile land providing with large number of individuals whose trust can easily be earned, subsequent of assurance of virtues, noble deed and dearness in the sight of Creator. Consequently, it is pretty trouble-free for ISIS, to establish a sound operational ground in this piece of land, hence adding government miseries. The government can not get away with simple renunciation of presence of footprints of ISIS, instead a tangible measure should be put into practice, to get out of this menace; else's large num-

ber religiously betrayed individuals will respond at the call of Amirul Momineen, by joining the ranks of such militants.

The worsened condition of law and order and frequent activities of ISIS and Taliban reflects as if insurgents are running a parallel government. On the other hand the former arbitrary release of large number of Taliban inmates seems to be strengthening their might and they are signaling their presence by carrying out attacks. What is clear is that the insurgents are expanding the range of their operations. The insurgents are operating at will and quite rapidly expanding operations to parts of the country where it previously appeared to have little ability to act. It also seems that the militants are familiar with important installations, and their attacks are meticulously staged.

In the land of atrocities, Taliban were already flexing their muscle for greater share in Afghanistan politics -the space decade long war between coalition forces and Taliban produced is eventually filled by militants of Daesh. Reportedly, Taliban and Daesh are fighting for pressing their opponent. A recent report released by the Pentagon in Washington D.C. states that Daesh is expanding in Afghanistan and preparing to confront the Taliban. According to the report, the Taliban are also monitoring Daesh's activities, and the two groups have already faced off in confrontation on several occasions. For now, however, the battle against Daesh in Afghanistan is predominately taking place on a local, provincial level.

In order to draw greater focus on changing political scenarios, Taliban recently sent a highly-publicized letter to Daesh leaders emphasized that there is no need for a new front in Afghanistan. The letter warned that if Daesh forces open a new battlefield, then they could face strong opposition by the Taliban. The Afghan Taliban has urged the self-styled caliph of Islamic State, Abu Bakar alBaghdadi, to keep his ultra-extremist group out of Afghanistan. An open letter sent by the acting chief of the Taliban's central council, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor, said there was no need for launching a "parallel front in the presence of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. According to the Taliban letter, since 1,500 religious scholars have name the leader of the Islamic Emirate in accordance with 'Sharia' and renowned scholars across the Muslim world have declared allegiance to him, "everyone should work under one leader and one flag".

Taliban' letter to Daesh not only confirms their presence but affirms entrenched footing -the former reports that fighters from both groups have fought deadly battles in parts of eastern Nangarhar province inflicting heavy losses to rivals support. The Taliban already suffer agitation over the defection of several cadres to IS. Taliban, having fought for several years got closer to reinstate with Kabul's central government. How would they submit this very achievement to IS?

It is very critical time -the entire world is facing threats from renowned terrorists groups and is rendered vulnerable to attacks of these terrorists. The whole state of affairs depict the years long war fought against government and international coalition forces - distinctly is the war fought for political dominance than serving an Islamic cause.

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Security Crisis

By Hujjatullah Zia

There will be security challenges in the upcoming six months, but the capability of security forces is very high. Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will destroy the terrorists and will prevent the situation from becoming a crisis." These words were spoken by Interior Minister Noorulhaq Ulomi on Sunday during an address to the Upper House.

This comes as Afghan police and civilians lose their lives in day-to-day acts of terror. As a result, 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, a two per cent decrease from the same period in 2014.

"With the seasonal resumption of higher levels of conflict-related violence, the United Nations urges all parties to the conflict to take all necessary measures to protect civilians," said Nicholas Haysom, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA.

Speaking to the UN News Center on Tuesday June 30, 2015, he warned that the country was facing numerous challenges that will take time to sort out.

Terrorism and instability have plagued the country tremendously. To the Afghans' unmitigated chagrin, the civilian casualties increase with each passing day in indiscriminate attacks and suicide bombings carried out by the Taliban insurgents - women and children are also among the victims. Moreover, unemployment and economic stagnation - which rule the individuals' life - are the products of the current turbulence. It is the nature of war to propel a society towards stagnation and greater deadlock. Therefore, Afghan people are wrestling with a number of formidable challenges which root in militancy.

Aimal Faizi, an Afghan journalist and former spokesperson for former president, Hamid Karzai, has written that targeted drone attacks - carried out by the US troops - kill scores of civilians and armed opposition forces alike. These strikes violate Afghan sovereignty and international law, and severely undermine human rights while underscoring the ongoing threat to civilian lives in Afghanistan. So, it is sorry to say that Afghan civilians are killed not only by the Taliban militants but also by the drone attacks. According to him, the ongoing and intensifying drone campaign has "reportedly killed around 400 people in Afghanistan over the last six months."

He further said, "Beyond the civilian casualties caused by these strikes, drones also fuel terrorism, increase anti-government sentiment and, as a result, increase recruitment opportunities for the armed opposition in Afghanistan."

Moreover, Nicholas Haysom said on Tuesday that it would be "disastrous" if Afghanistan was forgotten about amid more pressing global issues. On the matter of security, he said that the nature of

the challenge is evolving, but that one needs to bear in mind that this is the first year the ANSF have taken sole responsibility of managing the security of the country. Regarding foreign troops, he said Afghanistan has not simply seen a military withdrawal but also an international civilian withdrawal. "There has undoubtedly been an economic contraction with more visible signs of poverty, even in Kabul itself. In the three years that I've been in Kabul, there has been a deterioration of security."

The Afghan national Security Council will have to examine all the drone incidents from the past six months and make its investigation public. Afghans have the right to know how many of their country's men, women, and children die in these drone strikes. Their government should bring this clarity to them. Additionally, the government is supposed to reach out to the families of victims and provide them with compensation.

The US administration and the Afghan government should take the advice of former US and NATO forces commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, who once rightly said: "For every innocent person you kill, you create 10 new enemies."

It is likely that war against militancy is a national war that will ebb and flow until the state has both a winning strategy and the relentless determination to implement it. In the war against terror, the state has not really gone beyond the disruption and dismantling of terrorist cells. I believe that this approach does little to address the militancy threat in its many dimensions. Terrorist networks do not exist in isolation - from funding to transport and from hideouts to indoctrination; any given militant group exists and operates with the help of a number of supporting actors. That much-needed support often comes from various elements.

Seemingly, the country will sustain turbulence and economic recession unless a thorough and serious counterterrorism strategy is planned by regional and international communities. The foreign officials have confessed that the US-led NATO anti-terrorism strategy failed in Afghanistan. But I believe that the "war on terror" gave counterproductive result - the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) groups reflects the very bitter fact. Prior to 9/11 attacks, Afghanistan was in the grip of the Taliban's militancy, however now it is threatened by both Taliban and IS insurgents.

Since Afghan Interior Minister predicts a sinister increase in the Taliban's insurgency, the government has to take protective measures and intensify the counterterrorism campaign so as to save the country from the verge of collapse. In short, the rhetoric claims against the insurgents will be in vain unless these all come to fruition through action. Afghan people are highly exhausted from war and bloodshed and economic constraints and pray to have their bread and butter in a peaceful environment and have their rights - especially their rights to life, liberty and estate - protected.

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