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Editorial

Effective war management essential against enemies

The scope of war and violence expands every day in the country, as Taliban attacks on districts and remote areas have increased and Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) bases often come under attacks of the insurgent groups. During the recent months, several districts have fallen to Taliban hand and further districts and villages are under serious threats.

Taliban have been trying to take initiative in battle fields and occupy further geographies. At present Taliban sparing no efforts to attack every district they wish and disturb government order there.

Considering current security situation, people are worried that Taliban would make further territorial gains in the coming weeks if they were not pushed back.

Civilian causalities have reached its highest figures, as in recent five months, thousands of people either displaced or have been killed in Afghanistan, including children and women. In May, the average causalities had reached up to 170 people per day. Taliban's IED, explosions and suicide attacks had inflicted further damages to civilians and public properties.

Taliban offensives and regular bloodshed campaign caused destruction of public utility installations, and damages to people houses and residential areas. Intensified wars in province have displaced and vagabonded thousands of families too from their localities. Meanwhile increase of IDPs due to war and violence have created further vulnerability in society.

The government and ANDSF institutions are required to step up and manage current situations. Effective war management is essential against the country's enemies and the Afghan government in needed to do more to bring changes within the military ranks so that to control the situation and protect and strengthen government sovereignty in districts and provinces.

The Afghan government should evaluate and assess situation of security and military bodies and bring essential changes in management and leadership of these bodies. Respective fall of districts and villages by the Taliban is intolerable. If the falling process of the areas under the government control continue in this way, the state prestige and reputation would be strongly damaged and its position in peace process would be weakened.

The Afghan government is required that beside easing equipment for ANDSF, exploit available opportunities and capacities among public forces and restore security and stability to the country. Local and popular uprising forces, political leaders and popular charismatic figure who wish to fight against Taliban beside ANDSF for ensuring security and safeguarding of government serenity, should be strongly supported and their capacities and capabilities must be exploited.

Influential and political leaders of local forces and popular uprising groups should be changed to strong and reliable arm of the system and be included in process of ensuring security and fight on security threats.

The main objective of ensuring security, removal of threats and Taliban attacks, is safeguarding of the system stability and strengthening of government order in the country. In order to achieve this objective, all available resources and capacities must be utilized. Meanwhile its of immense important for the local people to extend support for their security forces, as they are fighting the enemies for the welfare of their people, country and the ruling system.

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Khalilzad warns of regional interferences if war continued in Afghanistan

US special representative for Afghanistan reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad, currently on a regional tour amid the withdrawal of American and coalition forces from Afghanistan, said in an interview with a local TV channel, Tolonews, that two options remain for Afghanistan at this critical juncture, which according to him is a political solution to the conflict or continued war. He reiterated that the United States will not abandon Afghanistan despite US troops leaving.

In his first interview with TOLOnews after the start of the troop withdrawal, Khalilzad said on Monday that attempting a military solution will result in a continued war, while also acknowledging that the peace process in Doha has been slow and that both sides of the negotiations have not focused on the main issues.

Khalilzad is accompanied by an interagency US delegation, and upon its arrival the group held separate meetings with President Ashraf Ghani and HCNR Chairman Abdullah Abdullah, focusing on the new chapter in Kabul-Washington ties as well as discussing region's role in the peace process.

The Taliban recently floated a request for the release of 7,000 more prisoners by the Afghan government as well as the removal of their leaders' names from the blacklist, as catalysts to renew the peace efforts. But Khalilzad said these two conditions are not practical given the current circumstances in which violence remains high in the country.

Khalilzad said that the Taliban has not responded to a US plan for Afghanistan's future after it was shared with them, and they have not returned a plan in response to the United States.

"Some Taliban negotiators, including their chief negotiator Shaikh Hakim, went to Quetta and had some discussions, and have returned now and say they are interested in the resumption of the talks in the near future, and that they might submit their plan to the Republic delegation," Khalilzad said.

The Ministry of Defense reports clashes between Afghan forces and Taliban in more than 10 provinces on a daily basis, and analysts say there is no clear information about the progress of the peace talks.

Indirectly acknowledging the high level of violence, Khalilzad warned that the continuation of fighting after the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan will open the way for regional interferences in the country.

"There are two ways in a long-term perspective: Either there should be a political agreement or there would be a continued war. And God forbid, if an endless war happens, interferences in Afghanistan's affairs by the region might increase, and this is not in Afghanistan's favor," Khalilzad said.

Recently, some districts have been either "evacuated" or security forces have made "tactical retreats," including two districts on Sunday--one in Uruzgan and the other in Ghor-- increasing the challenges faced by Afghan forces to maintain morale.

Concerning the fate of the Afghan army after all foreign troops pullout, Khalilzad in Monday's interview said "some among the Taliban" are "proud of" Afghanistan's army, a statement which contrasts a remark by Taliban's former chief negotiator Abbas Stanekzai who in 2019 spoke about "dissolving" Afghan army once the group takes power. Stanekzai's remarks were at the height of the group's talks with US negotiators that led to the signing of the Doha agreement.

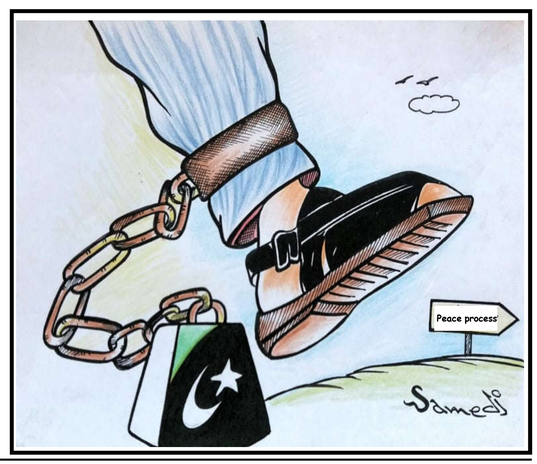
Khalilzad said there was now an army that "did not exist some years back when the US came in, a national army that we are also proud of ... believe me, even some Taliban are proud of it and said 'don't let this army be dismantled."

However, the Taliban's former chief negotiator said the following around that time: "This is not our national army. An army would defend Afghanistan's borders, defend against the enemy. This army is under the control of the enemy itself… When the Americans leave, their payments will end and they will be ended too," Abbas Stanekzai said in February 2019.

In response to a question on the legacy of the US war in Afghanistan, which cited the scrapped equipment by American forces outside Bagram Airfield and the deadly attack on a school in the west of Kabul as indicators that would challenge a US narrative of success, Khalilzad said these does not tell the whole story of the US's legacy in the country.

"This is a tiny and limited part of the history or the legacy – as you mentioned – of the US presence in Afghanistan. I want to say that the US troops are leaving but the US is not leaving Afghanistan. A strong relationship will continue, but I see other things, too, as the legacy of the US presence in Afghanistan. I see TOLO (TV) as a legacy of freedom of speech," Khalilzad said. "It was made after the US presence, a new system was established, a new environment was created. I see a large number of girls going to schools, I see universities full of students, I see the extension of life expectancy among Afghans, I see the youth who show their skills, the institutions that have been built, the improvement that has been achieved."

Khalilzad said that the United States will stand with Afghan security forces until peace is established in the country, and cited the $3.3 billion that the Biden administration put in the proposed Pentagon budget for Afghanistan in 2022.

Khalilzad said he is accompanied by a team from various agencies that will meet with the Afghan government about the transfer of responsibility as American troops withdraw, as well as issues following withdrawal including peace, economic and security cooperation.

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