

## International Daily

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## Editorial

## ANDSF fully prepared to defend territorial integrity

Addressing a cabinet meeting on Tuesday, The President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Mohammad Ashraf Ghani said that there is no collusion and will for surrender, adding that "We live a dignified life, now is the day of courage, will and determination."

The president pointing to the recent Taliban insurgency and collapse of some districts to the militants in some of the country's provinces, said that: "If the Taliban think a takeover from us, they will not reach the goal in hundred more years. The responsibility of bloodshed and destruction are on the shoulder of the Taliban and their supporters."

Meanwhile, the former President Hamid Karzai said on Tuesday that the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces are "better prepared" to protect Afghanistan on their own as international troops are leaving the country, but he reiterated that Afghans should deal with the ongoing foreign interference.

Karzai said that Afghanistan is not a failed state, adding that "as far as the Afghan people are concerned, they created a constitution, they went to the elections, they embraced democracy whole heartedly, they went to school, the educated themselves, we have millions of Afghan boys and girls educated today."

Indeed fighting against the Taliban and combating terrorism, Afghan soldiers have paid high sacrifices, and won unprecedented support from the Afghan masses. The Warring factions, mainly the Taliban militants, are widely involved in war crimes as they violate the humanitarian law and have been murdering our both combatants and non-combatants on daily basis without any religious justifications or sense of humanity.

Contrary to their remarks and statements on peaceful approach to Afghanistan issues, Taliban have chosen war and bloodshed and sparing no efforts to destabilize the country, destroy infrastructures and disrupt the peaceful life of the Afghan masses.

But despite supports of some intelligence agencies of the region and international terrorist, Taliban have been denied by brave Afghan forces to take over the country by force and implement their vicious goals. Despite of taking control of some small districts, Taliban still could not take any city or any large part of the country, as Afghan people stood along with their forces and repelled the insurgent's attacks.

Afghan soldiers have shown their bravery and gained national honor for the country throughout the history and will do so in the future, too. They must be paid enough heed and the life and dignity of their families should be ensured forever.

Indeed, our brave soldiers, who fight not only to protect nation's rights but also to root out radical groups, should be considered the national heroes and heroines. Their sacrifices are highly appreciable, and their names should be eternal in our history.

The Afghan forces despite of many challenges and lack of essential military equipment, have not yet allowed terrorists to disturb Afghans and take over control of the country. They have given much sacrifices and would continue to do so for their country and protecting of the territorial integrity.

Meanwhile, recent springing against Taliban and support for Afghan forces should be continued, and hence, the Afghan government should prevent from further casualties of Afghan combatants and non-combatants through adopting effective strategies.

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## Pakistan should stop looking to leverage the Taliban

By: Mito Sharma



Pakistan's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, was convinced his fledgling nation's most valuable asset was its location. It is an interview a month after independence.

"Pakistan is the pivot of the world, as we are placed" — he resolved his long struggle in three words — "at the frontier on which the future position of the world rests."

In 1947, the world was just entering cold war. Brooke White explained that Pakistan's expectation of the United States to pay hand-

somely for a strategically located ally's development — and to find its military as well.

Decade later, tragically little has changed. As the U.S. follows through on President Joe Biden's ill-considered abandonment of Af-

ghanistan, Pakistani leaders are convinced they can use their leverage over the Taliban to win concessions from the U.S. Seven decades of geopolitical struggles of this sort have not helped Pakistan, its citizens or its economy. Islamabad shouldn't expect them to work any better this time.

U.S. combat troops will have left Afghanistan by September. That's when the International Monetary Fund conducts a much-delayed review of its \$6 billion

bailout of Pakistan. The IMF warns Pakistan to step up the pace of macroeconomic reforms, particularly in its troubled energy sector.

Prime Minister Imran Khan, on the other hand, is very conscious that elections are only two years away. So, the budget to government presented last month didn't quite meet the IMF's demands. While the budget did include a few tiny steps towards balancing Pakistan's books, even those set off political flames. One

— a tax on mobile data usage — was immediately withdrawn. Khan doesn't want to abandon the Islamist-refugee vote he promised voters in 2018. He has also pledged that his "new Pakistan" will stand up to the West more.

Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin, defending the budget that was supposed to placate the IMF, has insisted that Khan had "stood his ground" against the outside world, in fact, was expanding the welfare state. The IMF won't be happy.

And if it isn't, Pakistan's other big multilateral lenders, particularly the Asian Development Bank, won't step in to help either.

That's where the U.S. comes in. In the 1947 interview, Jinnah claimed that "the United States needs Pakistan more than Pakistan needs the United States." Similarly, the Financial Times recently

reported that the government hopes that the U.S. need for help in stabilizing Afghanistan after the withdrawal should give Pakistan "some space," particularly when it comes to the IMF. (Tarin denied the report.)

Speaking to the New York Times, Khan claimed he was ready to cooperate with the U.S. and "do everything except one military action against the Taliban." Yet, as our former Pakistan diplomat has pointed out, it's hardly helping

now. The Taliban's leaders continue to live safely in Pakistan, even as they slow-walk negotiations with the Afghan government and continue to seize territory.

Playing such games has not served Pakistan well. The last time Afghanistan fell to the Taliban, Pakistan had to deal with a flood of refugees and the permanent destabilization of its Pakistan-occupied border areas. Worse, the Taliban have incited and inspired other extremist movements, including in Pakistan itself.

Between 2008 and 2016, the Pakistan version of the Taliban spread as well across the country — most horrendously killing 12 schoolchildren in an army school in Peshawar in December 2014.

Geopolitical conditions are also less favorable now. Pakistan's early leaders prospered from picking the American side in the cold

war. But a world increasingly shaped by disputes between the U.S. and China doesn't look to be as profitable.

Khan told the New York Times that what he really wanted was for the U.S. and China to "get on and trade with each other" — perhaps so his government could receive handouts from both. But Beijing isn't exactly rubbing oil off the gates in Islamabad's budget. Meanwhile, the U.S. doesn't trust a Pakistan that is there will use bailout money to pay bondholders linked to the Chinese state.

More importantly, handouts would only perpetuate the boom-bust-and-bust-and-cycle that has tormented the Pakistan economy for years now. If Khan really wants his country to prosper, he should focus on the tough structural reforms the IMF is demanding and get the economy on a more sustainable path. He may worry about the political cost. The price of continuing to coddle extremists would be much higher.

Mito Sharma is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. He is a senior fellow at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi and head of its Economy and Growth Program. He is the author of "Retreat: The Last Chance for the Indian Economy," and co-editor of "What the Economy Needs Now."

