Pakistan, China want peaceful, stable & united Afghanistan

Foreign affairs ministers for both Pakistan and China have recently said that peace and stability in Afghanistan are vital for economic and social development, connectivity and prosperity in the region. They have called on all sides to ongoing conflict for ceasefire in the country.

In a joint declaration released following meeting between foreign ministers of the two countries, all sides to the disputes in Afghanistan have been asked to seriously work together to reach a conclusive, overall and comprehensive government through negotiations.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi made the call at the third session of the foreign ministers' strategic dialogue in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, China.

They said that both sides were declaring their commitment to facilitation and supporting Afghanistan peace process led and owned by Afghans and asking for a peaceful, stable, united and prosperous Afghanistan that could fight terrorism and live peacefully with its neighbors.

They also called for ceasefire in Afghanistan and declared their support to the country's peace process, adding that they were ready to expand their economic and business relations with Afghanistan.

The two countries pledged to work jointly for peace to prevent a possible civil war in Afghanistan, and mediate negotiations among the Afghans.

In recent weeks, tensions between Kabul and Islamabad have increased. Afghanistan government has accused Pakistan for supporting the Taliban that has intensified violence across the country.

Days back, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani in a cabinet meeting said that Taliban and thier supporters were responsible for bloodshed in Afghanistan.

With recent remarks and meetings between foreign affairs ministers of Pakistan and China, it is hoped that political tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan reduce in some extent.

China is considered as a close friend and neighbor of Afghanistan. The country was one of allies of Afghanistan as it has provided lots of assistance to the country in both economic and cultural sectors.

Increasing presence of extremist and terrorist groups in Afghanistan and favorable centers of extremism in China's Xinjiang can threaten security of China in future. In addition, the ISIL – K or Daesh group is considered as serious and big threat to China. To counter and address all these threats, China is interested in maintaining peace and stability in Afghanistan. Both China and Afghanistan cannot ignore the common challenge and threat.

A number of Afghan international relations experts believe that China is a close ally to Afghanistan and can help in the country's peace process as it has somehow influence on Pakistan.

The country can convince Pakistan to stop supporting terrorism. China understands well that the main hub of extremism and terrorism is in Pakistan.

Currently, Afghanistan is at the frontline fighting terrorism and extremism. If this line is broken or weakened, China and Russia will become insecure. In consideration to the formation of security equations in the region, ISIS, al-Qaeda and all other terrorist groups are trying to reach China and Russia and for time being, Afghanistan is the front line of ongoing war on terror.

China and all other countries in the region need to help Afghanistan reach lasting peace and stability. If not, the region will soon witness tensions and insecurities to be caused by terrorist and extremist groups supported by Pakistan.

This comes amid surge in Taliban attacks and violence across Afghanistan.

Lailuma Noori

Over 22,000 Afghan families move out from Kandahar in a month

KABUL: Over 22,000 Afghan families fled from their homes to escape fighting in the former Taliban bastion of Kandahar as authorities arrested four suspected insurgents over this week's rocket attack on Kabul, officials said on Sunday several foreign news agencies reported.

Since early May, violence has surged across several provinces including in Kandahar after the insurgents launched a sweeping offensive just days after the US-led foreign forces began their final withdrawal.

The Taliban's deadly assault has seen the insurgents capture scores of districts, border crossings and encircle several provincial capitals.

Dost Mohammad Daryab, head of the provincial refugee department said, "The fighting has displaced 22,000 families in the past one month in Kandahar.

They have all moved from the volatile districts of the city to safer areas."

On Sunday, fighting continued on the outskirts of Kandahar city.

"The negligence of some security forces, especially the police, has made way for the Taliban to come that close. We are now trying to organize our security forces," said Lalai Dastageeri, deputy governor of Kandahar province.

Local authorities had set up four camps for the displaced people who are estimated to be about 154,000.

Kandahar resident Hafiz Mohammad Akbar said his house had been taken over by the Taliban after he fled. "They forced us to leave… I am now living with my 20-member family in a compound with no toilet," said Akbar.

Residents expressed concerns the fighting might increase in days ahead.

"If they really want to fight, they should go to a desert and fight, not destroy the city," said Khan Mohammad, who moved to a camp with his family.

Kandahar, with its 650,000 inhabitants, is the second-largest city in Afghanistan after Kabul.

Earlier this week, the chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff General Mark Milley said the Taliban appear to have "strategic momentum" on the battlefield.

But global rights group Human Rights Watch said there were reports the Taliban were committing atrocities against civilians in areas they had captured, including in the town of Spin Boldak near the border with Pakistan they captured earlier this month.

"Taliban leaders have denied responsibility for any abuses, but growing evidence of expulsions, arbitrary detentions, and killings in areas under their control are raising fears among the population," said Patricia Grossman, associate Asia director at HRW said in a statement.

The authorities meanwhile announced they had arrested four men they said belonged to the Taliban, accusing them of carrying out this week's rocket attack on Kabul.

"A Taliban commander, Momin, along with his three other men, have been arrested. They all belong to the Taliban group," ministry spokesman Mirwais Stanikzai told reporters in a video message.

At least three rockets landed near the palace on Tuesday as President Ashraf Ghani and his top officials performed outdoor prayers to mark the start of the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha.

The attack was however claimed by the jihadist Islamic State group.

Monitoring Desk

Violence increased as foreign forces leave Afghanistan

A statistic recorded from the battlefield indicates that the rate of violence and conflict has increased after foreign forces withdrawal from the country.

"From May 1 to July 15 this year, more than 2,900 security incidents happened all over the country resulting in the death of more than 17,600 Taliban fighters, security forces and civilians," according to the official statistic.

The average death toll has increased over the past two and half a month; the highest number recorded in the country in recent months.

This happens as both the Afghan government and the international community have repeatedly called on the Taliban to announce ceasefire and take the peace talks serious.

The demand by the International community, however, has not been met so far by the militants, and the clashes have intensified further than ever.

The country's president has recently said that the Taliban has no will for peace talks, so he has a plan on the table that will change the security situation in the next three to six months.

At the same time, security institutions said that the level of violence in the country has increased after the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan.

"Unlike the previous Eids, the Taliban intensified violence on this year's Eid, they harmed civilians during these attacks and in many cases took civilians lives," Mirwais Stanekzai Interior Ministry spokesman said stressing that the security forces have since been instructed to increase offensives and expel the militants from the provinces."

The plan, as the spokesman referred to the country's president remarks will change the security situation in the next three to six months.

Addressing a ceremony at the first Eid day, President Ghani said that the Taliban had no intention of making peace and that it was time to act up against them.

Referring to the government delegation's visit to Doha, the president added that the aim of the visit was an ultimatum with the Taliban and that there was an immediate plan for the next three or six months, and last week it was discussed that there should be an urgent and practical plan to change the state of war against the rising militancy.

Increase in violence is reported at a time when the withdrawal of foreign troops has completed by about 90 percent and the US has said that the process will be completed by the end of August amid intensified Taliban attacks in more than 100 districts over the past more than two months.

Clashes between government forces and the Taliban militants in the west, southwest, east and north of the country continue in recent months, resulting in the displacement of large number of residents in the insecure provinces.

Expressing concern over the current situation, a number of the senate members called for a change in the security forces military tactics and called on the security sector to draw up a plan to curb insecurity in the country.

"Security forces have to reconsider their military tactics in the face of Taliban attacks," according to the senate referring to the escalation of Taliban attacks in a number of provinces.

"Although the security forces are able to crack down on the enemy and defend their people and their land under the most difficult conditions, they must reconsider their defense and security policies, otherwise the enemy's threats will continue," the senate noted.

However, the statistics on civilian and security casualties indicate poor security throughout the country, but officials at the Ministry of National Defense reassure that Taliban attacks will be repelled.

"The security forces are working day and night to prevent Taliban attacks and the group has suffered heavy casualties," Fawad Aman the deputy spokesman for the Ministry of Defense told media.

He said that the Taliban have been defeated by the Afghan security forces everywhere in the provinces they launched attacks.

Suraya Raiszada

Why Afghanistan is another Vietnam – and why it is different

By: Dr. Greg Mills

As the Taliban makes rapid gains across Afghanistan in the wake of the American military withdrawal amidst fears of a "high-speed Saigon" evacuation, there are several key differences between Afghanistan and Vietnam.

For one, South Vietnam did not countenance democratic elections. By contrast, the Afghan government, and not the Taliban, welcomes elections as a means of cementing its legitimacy.

Whereas the Vietnamese nationalists were fighting to unify Vietnam, the Taliban are essentially, argues Afghanistan's First Deputy President Amrullah Saleh, fighting "to divide Afghanistan. While the Viet Cong were popular, the Taliban was never popular." And, he points out, while the North Vietnamese were left with little option but to fight for their liberation, "the Taliban are fearful that they will fade away without fighting."

But there are similarities in the American approach to their allies in both instances. These undermine Washington's moral authority.

In both instances, the U.S. negotiated a separate peace with their enemy without the inclusion of their erstwhile ally.

This left Saigon and, now, Kabul fighting that enemy.

The timing of this peace was badly off: rather than negotiate with the Taliban when it was weak, it did so when it was resurgent.

At its core, the international community failed, until very late in the day, to understand the political character of Afghanistan's conflict. The mood of vengeance in the U.S. after 9/11 meant it was in no mind to make peace with the Taliban, and bring about an inclusive settlement.

Rufus Phillips, a Vietnam hand, described the difference between American views and local aspirations as a 'fog of incomprehension' The same chasm of misunderstanding applies to Afghanistan, not least in identifying a political cause other than the removal of the Taliban that the Afghans could agree on and Americans believed were worth fighting for.

There is a critical human dimension to both wars. In Afghanistan, outsiders have generally failed to grasp the Afghan ability to cut deals in ways that allow them to compete for power and co-operate to make money at the same time.

These failures reflected a lack of understanding of the Taliban and of Afghanistan per se coupled with a tendency to caricature, and a consequence of poor planning and limited patience. 'I felt like we were high-school students who had wandered into a Mafia-owned bar,' said General Stanley McChrystal on his arrival in Afghanistan in 2002. It was stated policy that Washington didn't do nation-building.

As a result, it was all, initially, about bear hunting, at least until the West realized that they could not safeguard their interests without securing a friendly government in Kabul.

Just as the US failed to build a nation in South Vietnam, with a cause equal to that of the North, it has failed to do so in Afghanistan. Its solutions, strategy and tactics have not worked well enough.

The Taliban calculus could have changed if the West had signaled it was there for the long haul, like Korea. They were more likely to commit to a political solution if faced with the prospect of a long-term military stalemate instead of using it as a ruse to buy time

The West also failed to appreciate the extent to which Afghanistan's politics were personal and tribal rather than national, and the degree to which regional influences matter.

This should not downplay Afghans' own role in their misfortune, or Washington's preference to ignore the obvious political frailties as it sought to paper together a cohesive Afghan system without a peace settlement.

The final Vietnam echo is in the method and consequences of U.S. withdrawal. If it wanted to leave, that choice would have had to begrudgingly be accepted by the Afghan government, but not the manner of its departure. The West's attempts to escape its moral obligation to the people of Afghanistan will have consequences, not least in the value of its promises, and certainly not least to the millions of women now at the mercy of the Taliban's theocracy.

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