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Afghanistan: Peace demands sacrifice

By: Ali Akbar

As the Afghan government and the Taliban continue to struggle over who will control Kabul, they ignore the fact that they will not win any legitimacy unless the Afghan people agree to them. The Afghan people are the sole sovereign over the country and as such, the power is in their hands. The current Afghan administration and the Taliban should remember that unlike in the Middle Ages, today holding political power does not mean being crated but rather being a servant to the people. When it comes to all matters of the country, including war and peace, governance, reconstruction, the country will continue to suffer from economic underdevelopment, dysfunctional political infrastructure, bureaucratic inefficiency, and rampant corruption.



Members of the Peace Mediation Team (PMT) in Kabul, Afghanistan, August 10, 2021. (AP Photo/Amir H. Rahman)

During the past year, the talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban have stalled. As the conflict continues to have no end, thousands of innocent lives have been lost, displacement has become permanent, the economy has been shattered, the country has been suffering, and food production and supplies have been disrupted by facilities. This has put the lives of millions of citizens in serious jeopardy. This must stop now.

The Afghan people can clearly see that the government and the Taliban share a common goal: to break the deadlock, overcome their differences, and move the peace process forward. This was to be expected. The 25 years of animosity between warring factions, the losses each side has sustained, and the inevitable military victory rather than in peace are not producing other options. No conflict of this severity has ever been resolved without the mediation of a neutral third party.

By now, the United States, NATO, the international community, the people of Afghanistan, and the warring parties have realized that there is no military solution to the conflict. The continuation of war and relying on military means will only result in more bloodshed and violence. An immediate ceasefire should seek first

among all priorities. Without a political solution, peacebuilding, and reconstruction, the country will continue to suffer from economic underdevelopment, dysfunctional political infrastructure, bureaucratic inefficiency, and rampant corruption.

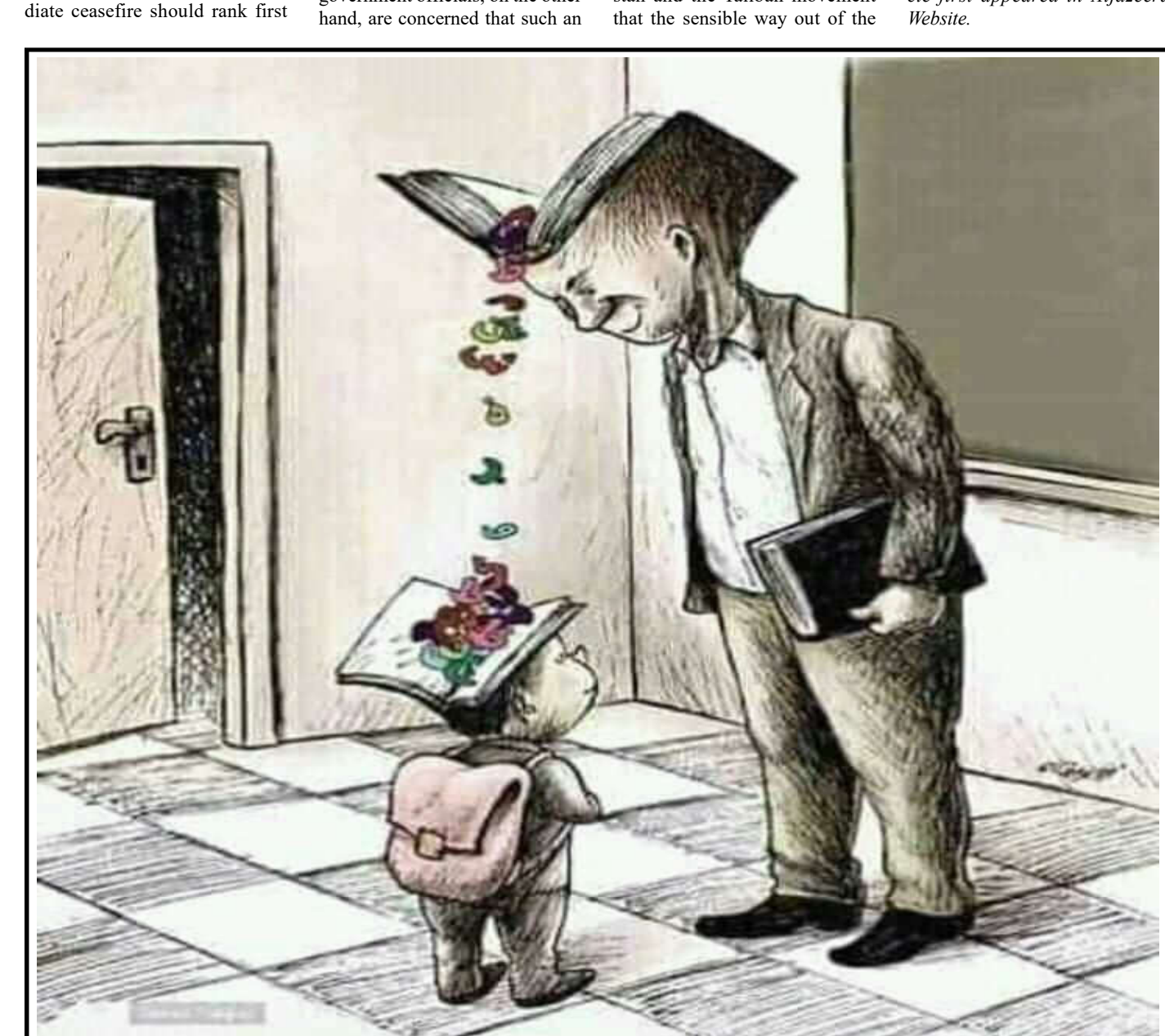
After the signing of the Doha Agreement between the US and the Taliban, the Afghan people were hoping for speedy positive development, after a year of non-substantive meetings between the government and the Taliban, the talks for an intra-Afghan peace agreement have stalled. It is evident that without third party mediation, the negotiating parties are unable to break the deadlock, overcome their differences, and move the peace process forward.

The PMT would like to assist the government of Afghanistan that should be prepared to make sacrifices for the nation's future and put an end to the devastating war that is causing countless loss of life and misery. The PMT would like to urge the Taliban movement that a collapse of the Afghan state will have dire consequences for Afghan citizens and will inevitably result in chaos and economic ruin. If the Taliban retreats to power by force rather than a peace process, it will likely face international isolation.

The members of the PMT are credible individuals with significant influence and reach who can convince the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban movement that the results will not be of their own making.

current crisis is through a peace process agreed and led by Afghans. The PMT believes the agreement between the US and the Taliban signed on February 29, 2020, has created a window of opportunity for peace in Afghanistan following decades of military occupation, civil strife, and instability by the Taliban, and the US's "war on terrorism". The Peace Agreement has also generated regional and international consensus to end the war through negotiation.

The PMT sees the regional and international support of the peace process as essential. It holds the role of the state of Qatar has played in the negotiation of the US-Taliban agreement and general support from Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for facilitating the talks. It also calls on Pakistan to use its diplomatic influence over the Taliban movement to convince it to approach the peace talks in good faith. Only with the help of regional and international actors, and with a true commitment to peace from the warring sides, can the current crisis be resolved, and the stability and prosperity of Afghanistan secured. It hopes to be an Afghan journalist and write for a major number of the Peace Mediation Team and former senior Minister of Defense in one of Hamid Karzai's governments. The article first appeared in *Director's Review*.



Editorial

Unity a must to overcome ongoing challenges

As war and conflict intensify in Afghanistan, many reports narrate the violation of human rights and civilians' casualties in the battles between the Afghan security forces and Taliban, that also led to migration of thousands of people. Hearing the reports, the Afghans are concerned about their future and suggest the situation should be taken under control in coordination with the Afghan government, prominent leaders and political leaders, as well as experienced military commanders.

According to the reports, many civilians are killed and many other flee their homes trying to take refuge in safer or government-controlled provinces, facing many challenges lack of shelter, basic needs, and food. If the fighting sides do not stop the war and embrace peace in coordination with the peace-supporting countries, it will lead to a humanitarian crisis, worsening the situation and making people start migration to the neighboring countries, which will affect them as well in a long term. Many countries have explicitly condemned the Taliban's recent gains in Afghanistan's larger cities, including the U.S. president, Joe Biden, who suggested a few days ago that the Afghan security forces have sufficient military equipment and it is the time for them to defend their country and respond to the Taliban's assault. As the Taliban increased violence and militarily advanced in some Afghan provinces, President Biden issued an order allowing airstrikes on the Taliban.

Indeed, if we closely and carefully look at the current situation of Afghanistan, we will realize that the ongoing situation is the result of the peace deal between the U.S. government which was led by U.S. envoy for peace in Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, and the Taliban leaders.

Therefore, outsiders' perspective of Afghanistan is like putting ice under the heat of the sun, an Afghan expression meaning deceiving and kidding with yourself because the Afghans have realized in the past two years that how much the international community, especially the countries claiming to be the strategic partner of Afghanistan, have been honest towards them.

For example, during the peace talks between the U.S. and Taliban in Doha, the Afghan government—a government that has diplomatic relationships with several countries of the world and is officially recognized by the international community—was marginalized in Doha peace talks.

As per the President Ghani's remarks at the special meeting of the national assembly, the U.S.-Taliban peace agreement in Doha legitimized the Taliban and sidelined the Afghan government.

Approving the remarks, one should add that the Taliban group was so directly or indirectly supported by some countries during peace talks in Doha that they turned into a political group, whereas they have no intention for peace and stability in the country.

As far as the Afghans know some regional and international powerful countries, they should not be excited about the remarks made by them, instead, the Afghans must themselves get unitedly together and don't let the peace talks take longer. Otherwise, if war intensifies continued in the country, the Afghans will be the ones who will be sacrificed and suffer, witness their homes and public facilities are destroyed.

Indeed, unity is beyond slogans or paternal advices. Unity had not been achieved and will not achieve unless we truly believe in a common and non-discriminatory law that one should love his neighbor as himself. Provision of this feeling is crucial to lead the nation on the world towards its progress, prosperity and sincere brotherhood.

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