

# US Withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Future of Peace in Afghanistan

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This paper focuses on the withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan, current situation in Afghanistan, expected advent of Taliban and the prospects of future peace in Afghanistan. Though the withdrawal of the US forces has not been complete yet there has been increase in the deteriorating law and order situation on the country. The main focus of the study is to dilate upon the alarming security situation in Afghanistan, the issue of COVID-19 putting hindrance in the way of peace process, need for political unity, wakening position of the ANDSF, aftermath of the Doha peace process, role of regional powers coupled with the significance of the Afghan civil society and the way forward. The article uses qualitative approach based on the analysis of secondary sources. The study is very significant for dealing with the very important and burning issue with regard to Afghanistan, passing through transition since the US forces are going to withdraw their forces and leave the political and security scenario of the country in the hands of the Afghan government. The study is quite original for focusing on a very important issues confronted by the Afghan government as well as the United States. It applies different techniques that could help in bringing peace in the war-stricken Afghanistan. Novelty of the research lies in applying latest books, articles, reports and newspapers providing latest developments on daily basis taking place in the Afghan stalemate.

**Key words:** *Afghanistan, Future, Taliban, ANDSF, United States, Security*



## **Introduction**

The US military withdrawal from Afghanistan has been viewed with different angles by the various actors of the world. Different opinions have been expressed by the neighboring countries, regional actors and global actors (Thomas, 2021 ). The Taliban are viewed as the most dominant factor to ascend the throne to the government of Afghanistan. According to the report claimed by the Taliban they are in control of 85% of the total districts of the country while the US is of the view that Taliban are in possession of 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the country (Ziauddin, 2021). The fact is Afghanistan will be destined to face the issues of civil war, power vacuum and power sharing formula. The advancement by the Taliban in the country has led to the failure of the US-Taliban Agreement of February 29, 2020 followed by the intra-Afghan talks that provided for the peaceful settlement of the Afghan stalemate. The US-Taliban Argument made a landmark in the history of the United States and Afghanistan that gave the legal status of stakeholders to the Afghan Taliban. The Taliban, had hitherto, been regarded as the non-state actors by the United States and the global community but the Doha Agreement gave them the status of legal entity when the major power of the world sat to talks with the Taliban.

The US government remains concerned about the worsening security situation in the country and fears that political stability will not last in the country. She is of the view that the Afghan government can hard last for six months after the US forces leave Afghanistan (Trofimov, 2021). Moreover the development of the anti-Taliban group by some of the key leaders would also lead to add fuel to the fire and would result in the instability and insecurity in the country (Ziauddin, 2021). The drawdown of the NATO forces from Afghanistan started in 2014 through different phases as at that time the US and allied powers decided to reduce the strength of their forces in Afghanistan (Tariq, 2015).

## **Problem Statement**

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan is a determining factor in the future prospects of political stability and security paradigm of Afghanistan. The US has determined to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan with a residuary contingent of only 650 soldiers to defend the US embassy in Kabul but the gravity of the situation lies in the fact that security situation in the country has worsened. Taliban are getting greater strength and claim to capture more and more territory day by day. Fears haunt the mind of the laymen that Afghanistan is going to be destined to face the same fate as was witnessed in the post-Soviet withdrawal scenario coupled with civil war, ascendancy of Taliban, leadership vacuum and lack of power-sharing formula in the country.

## **Objective of the Study**

To analyze the future prospects of peace in Afghanistan and the role of various actors in determining peace.



## Research Questions

- i) What are main hurdles in the way of peace in Afghanistan?
- ii) Why is there need for political unity to resolve the issue of political instability and insecurity?
- iii) How does the ANDSF play its role in maintaining order and security in the country?
- iv) What are the lacunae in the Doha peace process?
- v) Does the regional powers and civil society have to play any role in the future peace of Afghanistan?

## Methodology

The study relies on qualitative approach based on the secondary sources of documents analysis of latest books, research articles, reports and newspapers articles.

## Literature Review:

(Thomas, 2021) focusses on the US-Taliban agreement, withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan, its impact on the security parameters of the country and its impact on the human rights and the role of Afghan security forces in maintaining peace.

(Sopko, 2021 ). Describes the US strategy and policy in Afghanistan, the shift in the US policy towards Afghanistan during the Trump and Biden administration. He also deals with the role of the Afghan National and Defense Security Forces, violation of human rights in Afghanistan particularly during the Taliban regime, different roles played by women in the post-September 2001 scenario with specific reference to their participation in the political sphere.

Connah (2021). Argues the US and its allied partners misuse of 'just war' narratives for legitimizing their intervention in Afghanistan and fighting under the guise of war on terror. He explores the extent to which such interventions, military strategies, narratives and justifications by the US may have led to the failure of the state machinery in Afghanistan. The main cause for the failure of the state in Afghanistan is their direct involvement in Afghanistan by dethroning the Taliban government.

RAPHAEL & COHEN (2020). Dilates upon the future of warfare, the failure of forecasting the future, study of the future in the parlance of present, predicting the future of warfare, and implications for the US Air Force and the joint force. They also discuss the conflicts driving the US and the US Air Force response by analyzing the key geopolitical, economic, environmental, geostrategic, legal, informational, and military trends that is going to shape the conflict between the present and 2030.



Kelley & Ayotte, (2021). Focusses on the Afghan conflict that has entered into a new era after the US has decided to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan. The withdrawal may either destine the country to achieve political stability and security or it may be doomed to its previous condition of civil war and the resurgence of Taliban. According to them the role of the United States is very crucial in the peace process of Afghanistan. In case of the failure of the state machinery, the Afghan government may observe the worst security situation which may be very detrimental for the neighboring countries and the regional powers.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study is significant for focusing on a very burning and important issue of the modern time confronted by the international community. The rise of Taliban in Afghanistan has once again led to the failure of the international community that fought against the terrorists in Afghanistan for twenty years but has gained nothing out of the war. The long-standing twenty years of war by the NATO and allied power is but their failure and the triumph of the Taliban. The paper focusses on the future prospects of Afghanistan with the role of the various actors towards that end.

The current worsening law and order situation in the country has compelled the Taliban and the Afghan government to resume negotiations at a high level talks until settlement is reached for the future set-up of the government (ALJAZEERA, 2021). Both the Afghan government and the Taliban favor settlement of the issue through political means but reality seems different since Taliban are making advancement in the country while compelling the Afghan National and Defense Security Forces to flee to the neighboring countries for seeking refuge. According to Osama bin Javid, representative of the Al-Jazeera, said, “A hotly contested draft was put forward by both sides where finally they agreed to talk each other and to speed up talks. They agreed that the level of negotiations will be expedited” (ALJAZEERA, 2021).

The two sides have been meeting in Doha at regular intervals to reach at a peaceful agreement but they have failed to reach at a consensus-based agreement that could have resolved the long standing issue of political settlement and power-sharing formula in the country. The Qatar Agreement lost momentum when the Taliban engaged themselves in fighting against the law enforcement agencies of the state. They have been making advancements in the battlefield to the extent that the security forces of the country don't bother to fight against them rather take refuge whenever and wherever they find an opportunity. Different stakeholders fight for the sake of establishing their hegemony in Afghanistan (Tariq, 2015).

Supreme leader of Taliban, Haibatullah Akhunzada says that the “the Islamic emirates strenuously favors a political settlement” despite the groups fighting on the different fronts for gains on the battleground. Both sides are working for preventing the civilian casualties and remain concerned with the tussle between the Taliban and the Afghan security forces. Taliban leader, Haibatullah, is of the view that his group has shown commitment to forge a solution to



bringing an end to the war but has also criticized the group's opponents for wasting time for not striving to forge a solution to the issue. So, it is significant to note that the Taliban is not a monolithic but are now diversified having different factions and sub-groups that remain at loggerheads with one another.

But the Taliban are still busy in the various offensives against the state machinery of the country and the law enforcement agencies. The group is now believed to have control of almost half of the country's 400 Districts, several important border crossings and has laid siege to a string of vital provincial capitals (ALJAZEERA, 2021). The pro-government fighters have different stance, saying that they had conducted 244 operations, resulting in the death of 967 "enemy" fighters- including key commanders. According to a pro-government spokesman, Ajmal Omar Shinwari "we have recaptured 24 Districts so far, as our goal is to retake all the territories .....We are ready to defend our country". This shows the difficulty of the situation that has led to the failure of the US-Taliban and intra-Afghan talks. According to Al Jazeera's Rosalind Jordan, while speaking from Washington DC, "The US understanding has always been that something of this magnitude to reach a comprehensive peace deal between the Taliban and the civilian-led government in Kabul is going to take time and will be difficult. That is why you see all these repeated rounds of talks."

Fears have been expressed by the scholars and defense analysts that the Afghan security forces will be overwhelmed by the non-state actors in case they are not receiving any support from the US or the coalition partners (ALJAZEERA, 2021). Taliban are expected to get complete control over the country or would lead the country to a civil war that has already been stricken by the long standing presence of the Soviet Union for a decade during 1979 -1989 and now from 2001 to 2021. The United States is about to evacuate Afghanistan who assisted the US forces in Afghanistan to a military base in Virginia as they are awaiting special visa process to be completed, as was announced by the US State Department on July 18, 2021 (ALJAZEERA, 2021). Most of the experts and defense analysts are of the view that it will be very difficult for the US to monitor Afghanistan after the pull out of the 2500 forces when a residuary of 650 forces will be left to guard the US embassy the in Kabul.

Situation will become very complicated after the withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan as the US was unable to combat the terrorists and insurgents with a huge band of coalition forces. It is also difficult to assess that the US had not been able to overcome the overall law and order situation of the country after spending almost twenty years in the war-stricken country (NATO, 2021). From 2014, onwards the main focus of the US forces was to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces but still it was a matter of concern that the US forces could not even succeed during this period since most of the time there events of terrorism and attacks by the Taliban on the key sectors of the country. But it was in July 2018 when the NATO forces and the allied partners decided in Brussels to provide financial assistance and support to the Afghan security forces (NATO, 2021). Even in the aftermath of the US forces from Afghanistan, the US and allied partners are determined to continue their support for the



Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process (NATO, 2021). So, the US force and coalition partners will continue to extend their support and assistance to the government of Afghanistan in their struggle for political stability and peace process in the country.

Both the United States and the NATO forces are executing the policy of the US president Joe Biden's complete withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan and hand over security of the country to the Afghan National and Defense Security Forces (ANDSF) by September 1, 2021 (Wilder & Worden, 2021). The withdrawal would create a power vacuum and power-sharing will still be a great problem in the country since the Taliban have been successful in holding control over most of the area of the country (Tariq, 2020). The Taliban are gaining more and more strength of capturing key areas in Afghanistan where the Afghan security forces normally run to safer places particularly neighboring countries of Iran and Tajikistan to take refuge. The government of Afghanistan need to focus some of the key sectors for the survival of their country. The focus should remain on some of the following areas so as to save the country from further destruction and devastation.

### **Alarming Security Situation**

The government should focus on the morale of the Afghan security forces as they suffer from the inferiority complex in comparison to the Taliban. Owing to the past history of the Taliban in 1996 when they ascended the throne of the Afghan government, a sense of psychological and military momentum had got developed among the security agencies that Taliban are a greater force and can do great harm to the law enforcement agencies within no time. Besides their fighting spirit and victory on the battlefield, it is also their psychological superiority over the Afghan security forces that getting more and more Districts and key areas at a very rapid speed (Wilder & Worden, 2021). Districts fall easily to the Taliban partly due to the fighting spirit coupled with their psychological superiority and partly due to their remoteness from the central capital and low deployment of the security personnel. The next few months are more crucial and sensitive so far as the victory of the Taliban is concerned. Though the Afghan forces have been striving to fight against the Taliban yet their fighting spirit and low morale don't enable them to gain complete victory over the Taliban.

The airstrikes by the US forces on July 23, 2021 targeting Kandahar and Helmand provinces of Afghanistan is tantamount to sabotaging the ongoing peace process in Afghanistan, reiterated by the Taliban spokesman (Mohan, 2021). The airstrikes have caused casualties to civilians and the *Mujahideen*. The Taliban strongly condemned these attacks and urged that this would have consequences for the future peace prospects and the withdrawal of the US forces. Ashraf Ghani has made it clear that he plans to conduct major operations in the next six months (Mohan, 2021). While the Taliban are also of the view that during the next six month period, the responsibility for all military developments will fall on the leaders of Kabul administration (Mohan, 2021). Spokesman for the Taliban, Zabihullah Mujahid clarified that they would strongly defend their territories and will "not remain in a defensive posture if the



enemy insists upon war”. The US military launched a series of airstrikes this week by showing their support of the Afghan government forces while fighting against the Taliban strategically in the important province of Kandahar (Mohan, 2021).

### **The Issue of COVID-19**

The issue of COVID-19 is another concerning area that may lead to the decline of the combating spirit of the Afghan forces. It is a fact that the Afghan forces are much concerned with the rapid spread of the COVID since the number of affected persons keep on increasing day by day which will have a very negative impact on the overall economy of the country. The two main hospitals in Kabul have closed their doors to the new patients for lack of beds and lack of medical facilities in the hospitals. The third wave of COVID seems more dangerous than the previous two waves and has resulted in the increased number of internally displaced persons due to the problems arising out of conflict and drought, which stain the ability of the Afghan government to cope with the basic issues of health. The Afghan government and the various ethnic groups including the Taliban must focus on working jointly for curbing the COVID-19 and must fight collectively against it to gain political stability and security in the country.

### **Need for Political Unity**

The government of Afghanistan needs to focus on political unity and should take measures to strengthen leadership so as to create harmony and smoothness in the affairs of the government (Wilder & Worden, 2021). Afghanistan has been wrought by multiple ethnic divisions and factions that further leads to the political instability and leadership vacuum and hence resulting in the victory of Taliban and other insurgent groups. It is this dissention and elements of ethnicity that still stands in the way of political stability of the country. The country needs to create a strong federation based on the Canadian model that concentrates power in the central government and leaves very little to the provincial government (Tariq, 2018). The current political crises in Afghanistan may be seen through the prism of optimism that may fill the power vacuum resulting in the political unity of the various discordant elements and hence need to focus on a more centralized government with the Taliban sharing in the power structure of the government for preventing future imbalance and instability.

President Ashraf Ghani expressed deep concern on the EID day when the Taliban fired three rockets near the presidential palace and said that the ‘Taliban have no will for peace’ (ANI, 2021). He further adds that Afghan government is sincere in her efforts to bring peace but the Taliban have no sincerity as a result of which the Afghan security forces suffered greatly during the last twenty years and especially during the last three months (ANI, 2021). The president says that he has prepared a draft of two-pronged security plan of setting of priorities for security and defense while the second one aims at need for the national unity and integration which may take three to six months. Talking about his sincerity with the Taliban he adds that the Afghan



government has released 5000 Afghan Taliban but the group is still not ready for a meaningful dialogue.

### **Weak position of the ANDSF**

The complete withdrawal of the US forces will result in weakening the fighting capabilities of the Afghan National and Defense Security (ANDSF) that has been dependent on the US forces for the last so many years for maintaining the security of the country. It is an admitted fact the ANDSF has a history of twenty years to work under the supervision of the United States and NATO forces with their modern use of weaponry and latest technology but despite that they have not been able to develop and establish themselves on account of the psychological superiority of the Taliban. They have even been dependent on the US for their financial survival and substance (Tariq, 2021).

Security forces of the country has not suffered so much during the last twenty years as they did during the last three months because there has been rapid increase in the offensives by the Taliban despite the fact the government has released 5000 Taliban prisoners from their custody (ANI, 2021). The defense system of the country will take a few months to get established since till now the security system remained dependent upon the US forces since the inception of the security forces. One benefit which the Taliban has got from the US-Taliban deal is that they have gained great strength and momentum and have mainly remained occupied with the capturing of more Districts and target attacks on the key position and sectors (Thomas, 2021 ).

### **Aftermath of the Doha Peace Deal**

The Doha peace deal made an important landmark in the history of both Afghanistan and the United States when the latter signed a peace deal with the Taliban on February 29, 2020 in consequence of the US pull out from Afghanistan and leave the security of the country to the government of Afghanistan. It was a great opportunity offered to the Afghan Taliban by the US showing their willingness to withdraw from Afghanistan but the net result has been quite different. Most of the Afghan people are of the view that the Taliban are not sincere in their talks with both the United States and the Afghan government while their main concern has been the withdrawal of the US forces from the country but have more focused on strengthening their position and security paradigm (Wilder & Worden, 2021). The Doha agreement provide for the initiation of peace process between the U.S and the Taliban to be followed by the intra-Afghan talks that paved the way for the future peace in Afghanistan. But reality seems to be quite different when the blame game gained more impetus with the Afghan government blaming the Taliban for the worsening security situation while the latter holds the former responsible for the current situation (Tariq, 2020).





## **Role of Regional Powers**

Regional powers are very important to the Afghan issue. On account of the geopolitical location of Afghanistan, the security of the neighboring countries China, Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, India and Russia remain closely linked with the political stability and security of Afghanistan. None of these countries can benefit from the takeover of the Taliban or the civil war (Wilder & Worden, 2021). In case of takeover by the Taliban and civil war, there are greater chances to the disruption of regional trade and flow of refugees to the neighboring countries becoming a burden on the economy of the incumbent countries. Pakistan, being the closest and sharing long porous border with Afghanistan has a greater role to play in the security and peace process of Afghanistan (Tariq, 2021). Regional powers are very important to the security of Afghanistan on account of their close proximity and geostrategic location of Afghanistan (Putz, 2021). Through their collaboration and direct involvement in bringing both the Afghan government and the Taliban to a negotiable agreement would make the region secure one with greater chances of trade and foreign investment (Clayton, 2020).

## **Role of Afghan Civil Society**

Afghan civil society has also a greater role to play in the maintenance of political stability and security of the country. Assassinations of the civil society leaders and journalists coupled with threats from the Taliban, inability of the government security agencies to provide protection and general uncertainty about the political stability and security situation in the country are some of the key risks concerning the country. Leaders of the civil society urge that their focus has been on the achievement of harmony and smoothness of the government and reduction in violence in the country. They are also of the view that they stand for the balanced power-sharing of the political sphere without prejudice to a particular ethnic group. Civil society leaders need to find new ways and sphere of influence to the extent to make for a consensus based agreement between the Taliban and the Afghan government so as to prevent the country from further civil war.

The Afghan civil society had not been given proper treatment by the Afghan government as far as their protection is concerned (Ansari, 2021). They have been demanding to be included in press activities and need to give protection to the female social workers entrusted upon the duty of polio-vaccination have also been targeted with killings. It is also a matter of great concern that journalists, teachers, social workers and members of the judiciary have been killed brutally by the non-state actors. But it is also a fact that the most benefited class from the civil liberties and rights under the current government is the youth and the women class (Ansari, 2021). The greater involvement of the civil society in the affairs of Afghanistan would it a more secure and peace-loving country (Wardak, 2020).



## A Way Forward

Keeping in view the gross security situation and political instability, there is a greater need to streamline the security apparatus and political sector of the country to the extent of preventing the danger of civil war and foreign interference by any major power. It is time for the United States and allied partners to devote their energies to bring about patch between the Afghan government and various stakeholders, particularly the Taliban. This will result in lasting peace in Afghanistan bearing a direct imprint on the security of neighboring, regional and global powers. Promotion of a peaceful political settlement that cater for the U.S security interests, regional and global stability and above all the Afghan lives.

- Need to strengthen the Afghan government by broadening its support among the Afghan people and role of the leaders of civil society will do invaluable service to the resolution of the Afghan stalemate. Making an inclusive High State Council comprising the different stakeholders in Afghanistan would be a great step towards bringing political stability and securitized Afghanistan.
- Appointing capable and competent personnel in the ANDSF would result in enhancing the fighting and combating capabilities of the Afghan security forces to the extent of making the country a stronger one with the potentiality to fight against the terrorists and the non-state actors. This would make the country less dependent on the on the security assistance of the US and the allied partners.
  - The demand for peace in Afghanistan may be viewed as a great challenge by the regional and global powers and may struggle hard by converting this challenge into a broad based desire for mobilization and pressure on the political leaders of the Afghan government and the Taliban through social movement for peace. With support from these regional and global powers the mounting pressure on the Afghan government and the Taliban can lead towards the peace and stability in the country.
  - Strengthening the ANDSF by enhancing their ability would help in withstanding the attacks by the Taliban and other non-state actors (ISIS, ISKP and other insurgent groups). The U.S need to provide continued economic and weaponry assistance to the ANDSF so that the newly established security forces of Afghanistan gain more proficiency in fighting and combating terrorism and thwart any untoward attack by the anti-state elements. This would result in boosting up the morale of the Afghan security forces and would develop good fighting spirit for safeguarding the country.
  - Strengthening the aerial strikes capabilities of the ANDSF would give an upper hand to the law enforcement agencies of the country in preference over Taliban and other non-state actors. This would enable them to strike whenever and wherever required by safeguarding the key installations and key sectors of the country.

- Catalyzing more support from the regional actors for the ongoing peace process would also mitigate the threat of takeover by the Taliban and help in easing the tension between the two parties. The regional powers need to focus on arranging more and more rounds of talks so as to reach at agreed power-sharing formula among all the stakeholders in Afghanistan for gaining maximum political stability and securitized Afghanistan.
- Regional organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can play their role by acting as the third party in the formation of a consensus-based government in Afghanistan comprising all the political stakeholders in the country for making the region 'risk free zone'.
- The United Nations can also be the best option to help in reaching at a consensus-based political government in Afghanistan and monitor the security paradigm of the country to the extent of giving equal weightage to the different stakeholders for maintaining security of the country.
- The enlistment of more Taliban in the ANDSF by the government of Afghanistan would be a wise step to avoid further worsening law and order situation and help in creating a peaceful Afghanistan. This would make the Taliban the custodian of their country rather than focusing on their vested interest.
- Giving Taliban share in the legislative, executive and judiciary would make them more patriotic towards their country and would help in inculcating in them the spirit of nationalism and federation inhabited by the diverse multi-ethnic groups having a peaceful coexistence. This would also make the divers and multi-ethnic population of Afghanistan more responsible and cooperative with a spirit of tolerance for other groups.
- The Taliban should also realize that the US-Taliban Agreement and intra-Afghan talks should be implemented in true spirit and no particular group should benefit from the peace agreements partially. All the parties should have equal opportunities and benefits from the agreements by abiding the terms and conditions of the peace parleys.
- The Taliban need to realize that the main cause for their downfall in 2001 was their self-styled strict observance of Islamic law causing irreparable human and economic loss to Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and the allied partners. They should show leniency and softness in their attitude towards the citizens of Afghanistan. In case they come to power, they should keep in mind the reason for their decline in 2001 and should not repeat those actions that aroused the vengeance of the international community.

Keeping in view the current security situation and political instability of Afghanistan, it is the need of the day to make the country 'risk free' with political stability whereby all the important



stakeholders should participate in all the political, economic, social and security aspects of the country regardless of religious sects, language, race, color, creed and culture. Both the regional and international actors should focus on the political and security situation of the country so as to avoid the recurrence of 2001 syndrome on the map of the globe. A peaceful Afghanistan would mean a peaceful region and globe as the regional and global actors would be free to focus on some more positive activities in the world. Both the Afghan government and the Taliban need to know the limitations and delimitations of each other and need to learn the lesson of tolerance and forbearance since this would lead to the integrity and salvation of Afghanistan. Giving participation to the Taliban in the legislative, executive and judicial branches would make them more patriotic and would help in enabling them part and parcel of the country. Thus, the greater need is to make the integral part of the ANDSF would shun the sense of alienation and deprivation whereby the Taliban would play their due role in the security paradigm of the country.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

All efforts to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan centers around the successful dialogue between the Taliban and the Afghan government. Despite all efforts, the Taliban have been making advancement by capturing key Districts and launching rockets on targeted places. The hitting of three rockets on the Edi day near the presidential palace is testimony to the fact that the Taliban are not serious about peace parleys with the Afghan government though the government has released 5000 Afghan Taliban from the prison. Peace can only exist in Afghanistan only and only if both the Taliban and the Afghan government come on the same page. It is a matter of utmost concern for both the parties that peace is sine qua non for the country otherwise the country will be doomed to suffer the same pangs as she did in 1996 followed by 2001 when the United States had to intervene in the internal affairs of the government. If the Taliban want to be stakeholder in the political and security paradigm of the country, they must learn the lesson of flexibility and tolerance for the rights of the people irrespective of the gender, caste, creed, language, race and culture. The true salvation of Afghanistan lies in the dogma of tolerance and forbearance and giving place to the rival sect for the survival and future coexistence.

The US-Taliban agreement followed by the intra-Afghan talks provides for carrying on the process of peace in the country but the fact is the lack of sincerity on part of both the Afghan government and the Taliban. The Afghan government needs to install an interim government in the country comprising all the ethnic groups according to their population so as to be sure that they will be given their weightage in the coming power-sharing formula. On the other hand, the Taliban should not also make pre-emptive advancement in seizing areas and conducting target attacks so that the country may at least move towards stability and risk free zone till the total withdrawal of the US forces. The formation of the interim government would give all the ethnic groups the opportunity to realize that they are the real stakeholders in the country and will thus develop the sense of patriotism and would render true services to the



country. The Taliban too needs to reconsider their policy of capturing areas and hitting rockets on the targeted areas as this would lead to the repetition of the civil war, power vacuum and issue of true leadership. They should give leverage to the people of other ethnic groups regardless of the creed since this would help in developing the spirit of brotherhood and peaceful coexistence among the different ethnic groups of the country.

Federation is the most suitable solution for a country mostly inhabited by the multi-ethnic groups. It is the true federation that gives all the ethnic groups their due representation in the social, political, economic and security sphere of the country that give them representation on the basis of their population. Canadian model of federation may be one of the options for Afghanistan which aims at a strong central government while some powers are vested in the provinces. The center should deal with the most important issues of foreign affairs, defense, commerce and trade, and matters of importance concerning the regional and global politics. Matters concerning the local level such as education, health care, sanitation, local bodies and matters of less importance should be vested in the provinces. This would make the system more transparent and logical and would help in developing the spirit of 'shared-responsibility' among the people besides making Afghanistan 'risk free zone' in so far as political stability and security is concerned.

The extension of the ANDSF to the extent of including the Taliban by giving them some important position in the hierarchy would also resolve the issue of power-sharing and responsibility sharing in the country. This would also remove the sense of deprivation among the different strata of Taliban and would develop in them the spirit of patriotism and would lead towards the spirit of cooperation and coordination among the various ethnic groups in the country. Thus, the country would remain in a better position to gain political stability and security by living in peaceful coexistence. There is also the greater need to avoid developing the anti-Taliban groups in the country so as to avoid further civil war and dissensions in the country. Though development of such groups can be used as a counter balance to the Taliban yet avoiding such group would be more fruitful for the country. So for peace in Afghanistan, the Taliban must be assigned some key roles in the political, legislative, executive, judicial and security branches of the country.



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