**Kabul crumbling yet again**

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This piece is a follow-up to my earlier analysis “Ominous Clouds on the Western Horizon” dated June 6, 2021. As was perceived, the Kabul government appears to be caving in faster than expected by its sponsors. The Afghan national security forces are surrendering to the Taliban in and around the urban centres and important strategic locations quite willingly and preferring hugs than bullets and bombs to the dismay of US and allies who had invested millions of US dollars on training and equipment of the said forces. The Afghan Taliban are already conducting themselves as clear victors and are sending out unambiguous messages through tribal elders, “The non-believers are leaving Afghanistan. They are defeated. Your leaders are corrupt. You can surrender now, and we will protect you; or you can fight and we will kill you.” And the Taliban are so far keeping their promise not to punish Afghan soldiers who surrender, which is likely to encourage other ANSF units to follow suit and lay down their arms to enjoy the clemency.

[US forces shoot down armed drone over US embassy in Baghdad](https://nation.com.pk/06-Jul-2021/us-forces-shoot-down-armed-drone-over-us-embassy-in-baghdad)

In quite a few provinces, including in the north, the Taliban are tightening their grip on those cities which are still held by the government. It is estimated that the Taliban will soon be in a position to cut off food and other supplies and demand their surrender, possibly offering a similar compassionate immunity to the population. Moreover, with more and more captured weapons, equipment, armoured vehicles and artillery, the Taliban’s operational capability is getting a further boost to apply more pressure on the opponents. Suffice to say that it looks more like the repeat of the 90s, with an additional factor of mercy displayed so far by the Taliban to the contesting forces and population.

Despite Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah’s recent visit to the US and meeting with President Joe Biden, the future looks bleak for both of them who had been bluffing US and allies for a long period as a false façade of a democratic Afghan government. According to a recent Wall Street Journal report, the US intelligence community has assessed that the Afghan government could fall within six months of the withdrawal of NATO forces. However, it is hard to see the Kabul government lasting that long and several countries are drawing similar conclusions. Hence, the emergence of strong speculations that the US might undertake a hasty exit by July Independence Day instead of the announced 9/11, 2021 date; which was sending shivers to all diplomatic and aid missions in Kabul. The speculated fright prevailing about the quick crumbling of Kabul without any reassurance from the Taliban may cause foreign missions to abandon Afghanistan. Presently in Kabul a sense of fear and panic has already spread. The property prices in Kabul have gone down significantly with no buyers around as most families are fleeing to Tajikistan and other Central Asian republics since reports of the Taliban capturing most of the crossing places are reaching Kabul.

[Israel releases Jordanian citizen accused of 'spying for resistance'](https://nation.com.pk/06-Jul-2021/israel-releases-jordanian-citizen-accused-of-spying-for-resistance)

It is a well established fact that India had successfully juxtaposed her strategic interest of encirclement of Pakistan with American and allies’ interest of contesting and containing China and Russia in the region. However, the role given to India stands shaking on its foundation due to fast developments in Afghanistan. Resultantly, India is obviously panic stricken as evidenced by the Indian government efforts to fast track the opening up channels of communications with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar.

Reportedly, India invited a Taliban delegation to visit New Delhi and offered to continue Indian development assistance to Afghanistan in the future. That means, India has also seen the writing on the wall and acknowledged most eligible Taliban forming governments in Afghanistan in the near future. Fingers crossed with regards to how the Taliban will react to the sugar-coated Indian pill, which they had seen as a peace spoiler and as a proxies’ launching state both inside Afghanistan as well as inside Pakistan using Afghan soil besides being an American ally. However, as just experienced five days ago by explosion of a car in the heart of Pakistan Lahore by RAW/ NDS nexus as confessed by the arrested Afghan and other foreign terrorists, it appears that both India and her Afghan proxies want to continue playing the dirty hard ball through notorious Doval tactics for which Pakistan need not lower the guards.

[Highly contagious Delta variant raises concerns of 3rd wave of COVID](https://nation.com.pk/05-Jul-2021/highly-contagious-delta-variant-raises-concerns-of-3rd-wave-of-covid)

An important factor that Pakistan should not miss is the reluctant acceptance of responsibility by Turkey of the security of Kabul airport. Although the Turks were conspicuously only attacked once during their period running a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Wardak province, they are not unanimously accepted by the Taliban, who blame Ankara for its support of the Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum, notorious for killing hundreds of Taliban in the past. Therefore, any attack on Turks is fraught with multiple consequences and Turkey must not accept such a responsibility without an understanding with the Taliban. Likewise, with painful memories of the events in 2012 in Benghazi Libya, the USA is also in a catch-22 situation with regards to keeping her diplomatic mission in Kabul along with overt and covert security and intelligence operators. Whether Zalmay Khalilzad will be able to secure any assurance from the Taliban or not, only time will tell. One can only hope that this time around, the Taliban shall conduct themselves with more prudence, maturity, accommodation, better diplomacy and large heartedness for the good of their country and its people by avoiding bloodshed.

[Yemeni gov't wrests control of central district from Houthis](https://nation.com.pk/05-Jul-2021/yemeni-gov-t-wrests-control-of-central-district-from-houthis)

It is also hoped that US and allies shall prevail upon their representative in the incumbent Afghan government and ask them to finally reconcile with ultimate winners Taliban. Other regional countries like Pakistan, China, Russia, CARS, Iran and Turkey can play only a supporting role for smooth transition of power in Afghanistan; however, the main onus for lasting peace and stability lies with the incumbent Afghan Government, Taliban and other Afghan power brokers. While praying and hoping for the best, yet having learnt from the past mistakes, all countries and especially Pakistan will like to undertake all diplomatic, political, intelligence and military measures to save their own soil from the fallouts from yet another civil war like situation in Afghanistan.