No Peace Allowed in Afghanistan

Whatever hopes of returning to normal life regular Afghans have had until recently, these days those are all but dissolving like a morning mist. The so-called Afghan reconciliation summit that was to be held in Qatar has been put on the back burner indefinitely. It was envisioned as a separate event, unrelated to the direct talks between the Taliban and the United States led by the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, which marked the downfall of this format.

As it's been revealed by the Washington Post, so far there's been five rounds of negotiations between the United States and the Taliban, yet the parties failed to achieve any visible progress.

The resistance movement wants foreign troops out of their country as soon as possible, while Washington is all about keeping a foothold in this war-torn country. Afghan rebels would even meet with with those Afghan politicians not aligned with the official government in Kabul during a conference in Moscow last February. Yet, they would refuse to hold any sort of discussions with the sitting pro-Western president, Ashraf Ghani and his administration, as they describe him as a puppet in the hands of outside powers.

The situation is complicated even further by the ongoing disputes between the Kabul government and the above mentioned Zalmay Khalilzad. Last month, Ghani's national security advisor accused Khalilzad of showing signs of royal behavior, which in his opinion undermines the legitimacy of the sitting Afghan government. In response to the remark, Washington would cease to even notice the existence of this high-profile public figure.
In the meantime, it has been revealed that at least 11,000 civilians were killed and wounded in Afghanistan during the 1397 solar year which coincides with March 2018 to March 2019, according to statistics provided by Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

According to Die Welt, in the first three months of the year, American servicemen and their allies on the ground killed more civilians than both terrorist and rebel detachments operating in Afghanistan. As it’s been revealed by the UN mission in Afghanistan, the absolute majority of those deceased fell victims of US-coalition air strikes and ground operations. It’s also been added that in recent years the death toll among the civilian population of Afghanistan reached unprecedented numbers. Last year alone some 3804 civilians perished, with 7189 more suffering severe injuries. That’s an eleven percent increase over the previous year.

As the above-mentioned German newspaper notes, ever since Donald Trump removed any restrictions on the course of actions that the Pentagon may choose to take in its attempts to take the Taliban down, the US military has started dropping bombs on Afghanistan like there's no tomorrow.

Against this backdrop, Khalilzad’s recent announcement on Twitter, in which he stated that “we [the US] did not impose this war” reads unintelligent at best.

To present an objective assessment of the situation in Afghanistan, one has to note that on top of the rapid aggravation of armed hostilities between the Pentagon and the Taliban, it’s clear that two decades of total warfare have taken their toll on the population of the country, as some 51.7% of all Afghan citizens are living in bitter poverty, with a half of those being minors. Those figures have recently been revealed by the report drafted by the National Statistics and Information Administration of Afghanistan, assisted by UNICEF and the University of Oxford. At the same time, those figures differ drastically depending on the place of residence of those respondents that took part in the survey. In particular, no more than 18.1% of those Afghans living in large cities do suffer from outrageous poverty, while in rural areas this ratio reaches 61.1% of the total population. The highest level of poverty was registered in the northern Badghis Province, where four out of five people can't make ends meet.

In addition, with the aggravation of the armed engagements across the country, the number of drug crimes in Afghanistan has doubled over the course of a single year, according to the data presented by the Center for Drug Control of this Islamic Republic.

The laughable pretexts that Washington keeps inventing to justify its military campaign in Afghanistan don't seem to amuse the international community anymore. The sitting US president Donald Trump was forced to recognize this fact during his meeting with NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, last April. He would draw Stoltenberg's attention to the fact that the length of US military engagement in Afghanistan is nothing short of absurd, while mentioning that in the United States this war has already been dubbed as “the endless war.”

For the longest time, the US would try to broker a peace deal in Afghanistan on its own, but at this point it's clear that it will never succeed in this quest.

Therefore, we have to recognize that it's time for the international community to start playing a role in the Afghan settlement. On top of the above mentioned Moscow format, that brings together those countries that are located in the immediate vicinity of the war zone, namely China, Iran and the whole of Central Asia, it would be logical to launch a trilateral summit, bringing together Russia, China and the US for those to have a frank discussion of the situation. After all, it's clear for pretty much everyone that the only way to pull the plug on the Afghan meet-grinder is to broker a peaceful deal between the parties involved. Otherwise, tens of thousands upon tens of thousands of Afghan civilians will be added to the list of casualties of this senseless conflict.

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