

# Afghan Election and Peace Talks

Afghan presidential election amid threats from Taliban did take place with no serious security incident. The turnout was below the expectations and comparing the precious polls. Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, both are claiming victory and even Gulbadin is expecting a win. The official results will be announced during November though during last week of October we may get the unofficial outcome.

The second round is far sure as no one is likely to have gained over 50% votes, the constitutional requirement. Ghani is likely to retain the office for another term keeping in view the ground realities and global geo-politics. The American influence and desires are in tilt towards Ghani. Though Abdullah Abdullah must have assured his submission to the U.S yet the balance is likely to remain in Ghani's favor owing to the track records.

The gray matter in the election is the turnout which has raised the question of validity along with public response to the presidential aspirants. The tenure of Unity Government can not be termed or considered as success. The security remained a serious issue, negotiated settlement and talks were not an option as both Afghan government and the U.S were trying resolve through fighting, the economy remained nose down due to obvious reasons. So, the bottom line is that the masses have probably rejected the team and to some extent the election also.

The democracy, however is the continuation of election process irrespective of the polling turnouts, outcomes and the malpractices. This has been the poplar slogan about the previous elections and remains for the recent one. Keeping in view the security, economic and political situation of

Afghanistan, holding of regular elections is an achievement.

The impact of these polls on the peace efforts is another consideration as to how will the outcome effect the peace. The new incumbent will be going for intra Afghan dialogue, if materialized, which is one of the prime objectives of peace talks. Both Ghani and Abdullah are well conversant with the ongoing process and will be in a position to react, however Abdullah will be a better negotiator. He holds better sway against Ghani at masses level.

The peace talks, Doha process got stalled or was stopped on orders from the U.S president Trump on the pretext of killing an American soldier in Kabul. A rational to him but highly irresponsible and irrational decision at such a culminating stage to the peace process. The U.S, is a human rights champion therefore, should not have shelved the on-going talks, which were about to deliver positive, and when dozens of Afghan civilians were killed week before, then the killing of a Sargent. Surely the issue is not of humanity, its U.S interests and priorities that get precedence over the human lives.

One of the probable causes for sudden walkout from talks was the upcoming election and the legality of the Afghan leadership. Ashraf Ghani continuation in the president office is extra constitutional arrangements which was even objected by the co-sharer Abdullah Abdullah, beside many others. To make Ghani legitimized head of the state, and to allow the intra Afghan dialogue with rightfulness, Doha process was made to stand still. Another reason cited by few is the venue of the meeting, which was to take place in Camp David and the timings; the September and the 9?11 remembrance. Calling Taliban for probably finalizing the peace agreement along with Afghan leadership to the U.S, coinciding with the World Trade Center attacks, could have invited criticism by the anti-Trump segment of the society.

Afghans are of the view that the outcome of the Doha talks was positive and the agreement was finalized waiting the formal launch. Gathering of Taliban, Afghan government and the American at Camp David was in the same context but the refusal or shelving of the talks was to cater for the American rather Trump's interest. As stated earlier the venue and the timings. The U.S did not take into consideration Afghans miseries and sufferings and preferred own objectives over the peace in Afghanistan.

Where are these talks heading to? Will it recommence? If not, how the U.S exit will take place and how the intra Afghan talks can become a reality?

Pakistan is again trying earnestly to make peace a reality in Afghanistan. The recent talks between Taliban and Khalilzad in Islamabad are indicative of the sincerity and eagerness towards peace in the region. The question remains, how can Pakistan contribute? Pakistan according to many is having good influence over Taliban and for others having control. The reality is that Pakistan does enjoy influence but has no control, Taliban can never be controlled by anybody less themselves. Still Pakistan can make them realize the importance of peace in their homeland.

Pakistan is now enjoying a little better relationship with the U.S and in the wake of recent developments, may be able to make headway in negotiating terms of peace and settlements. Making Taliban agree to go for intra-Afghan dialogue and asking the U.S to announce the exit plans. Pakistan's stakes in today's Afghanistan are high in context to terrorism and in post U.S Afghanistan will be of even more concerns, as she cannot afford another post-Soviet vacuum like situation. Therefore, Pakistan will have to run an extra mile to reach the good ending.

