

No More US Boots at Afghan Doorsteps?

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In his refusal to sign the Afghan-US security pact which would enable some US troops to stay in Afghanistan after 2014, Afghan President Hamid Karzai is signaling a clear message to the United States: Afghanistan does not need US troops on its ground any more.

Unlike the US claim that the presence of its troops is meant to safeguard security and safety in the country, Karzai is manifestly no longer capable of bringing himself to envisage a safe country with American boots at its doorsteps. On the contrary, in the presence of US troops lingers an overriding sense of insecurity which has cast its phantasmagorical dark shadows over the entire region.

The NATO now has some 84,000 troops in Afghanistan, the majority American. In a tone which clearly sought to underestimate the authority of the Afghan President, US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Tuesday that Afghanistan's defense minister or government could instead sign the pact.

The controversial Bilateral Security Pact will determine how many US troops can stay in Afghanistan after the planned withdrawal of foreign forces at the end of 2014. Further to that, it will give legal immunity to American soldiers who remain in Afghanistan, an issue which has become a sticking point.

On November 19, Afghan President Hamid Karzai rejected a key provision of the pact which allowed the US forces to enter homes and said it was an act of aggression.

Besides, US troops in Afghanistan are disrupting order in the country as they interfere in the affairs of the Afghan police and military forces.

On Sunday, Karzai issued a statement claiming that US-NATO forces were withholding fuel and other material support from their Afghan counterparts in an effort to force him to sign the security agreement.

"This deed is contrary to the prior commitment of America," Karzai's statement said. "Afghan forces are facing interruption in conducting of their activities as a result of the cessation of fuel and supportive services."

"From this moment on, America's searching of houses, blocking of roads and streets, military operations are over, and our people are free in their country," he said.

"If Americans raid a house again, then this agreement will not be signed," he said, with the American ambassador, James B. Cunningham, in the audience.

Karzai has come under severe attacks by many in the US and in the West.

A senior US official has even warned that Afghanistan will eventually lose global support if Karzai keeps contributing to this recalcitrant attitude.

Tom Donilon, Obama's national security adviser until earlier this year, has said Karzai was "reckless" for risking a situation in which no US or allied troops would remain in his country after next year.

"I think it's reckless in terms of Afghanistan, and I think it also adversely impacts our ability to plan coherently and comprehensively for post-2014," Mr. Donilon told ABC News.

In another diatribe on Karzai, Dianne Feinstein, a senior Democratic senator, described the Afghan president as "a cipher". She said Karzai is "the victim of what thought occurs to him right at the moment based on some anger that he feels about something that may not even be related."

An ill-founded observation in this regard also comes from Omar Samad, former Afghanistan ambassador to France (2009-2011) and to Canada (2004-2009) and spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry (2002-2004). In his article titled: Be patient, the Afghans are fed up with Karzai which he has penned for CNN, he argues, "What lies at the heart of his aggressive posturing is the future of his family's political and financial interests after his second term ends in 2014. That strategy has also been markedly shaped by 12 long and strenuous years of Machiavellian exploits, insecurity and frustration with his Western backers."

Certainly Samad has been exposed to frequent political rote learning by the Westerners. And he wishes to hammer home an idea which hardly fits into any logical argumentation.

In other words, the only reason he sees behind Karzai's opposition to the security pact is purely personal rather than anything beyond.

Karzai who was even awarded an honorary knighthood by the British Queen at Windsor Castle is no longer an asset, a friend as he now stands in the way of the very pivotal forces which used to prop him up.

The deferment in signing the pact on the part of Afghan President has naturally frayed Washington's nerves and exhausted their patience. No doubt, the pact is of utmost significance to the US as it guarantees the success of any future military or intelligence operations in the region. That is why Iran has responded negatively to the pact. On Sunday, Iranian Foreign Ministry said Iran does not believe the security deal will prove beneficial to the Afghan government and nation.

The pact, if signed, will allow the US to maintain their nine permanent military bases in Afghanistan, which borders on China, Pakistan, Iran and the former Soviet republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

As the situation stands, pressure is piling up on the weakened Afghan government and the Americans apparently seek something more than a sheer presence in the war-weary country. Viewed as an American blank check, the agreement can well serve long-term military and intelligence purposes in the region.

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