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WINNING OR FAILING IN AFGHANISTAN IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL & GLOBAL SECURITY

H.E Shaida M. Abdali

Ambassador of Afghanistan to India



IPCS Ambassador Lecture Series
in collaboration with
India International Centre (IIC)



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About the Ambassador Lecture Series

Since 2011, the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, in collaboration with the India International Centre (IIC) New Delhi, has been organizing an exclusive series, inviting the Ambassadors and High Commissioners to address the strategic community in New Delhi.

The focus of these lectures have been on regional security and bilateral issues. Some of the recent lectures during 2012-13 include the following:

H.E. Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Andi M. Ghalib,
Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to India, 15 April 2011

HE Mark Sofer,
Ambassador of Israel to India
21 June 2011

H.E. Amb. U Zin Yaw,
Ambassador of Myanmar to India
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H.E Seyed Mehdi Nabizadeh,
Ambassador of Iran to India
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HE Joon-gyu Lee,
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8 May 2013

HE Shaida M. Abdali,
Ambassador of Afghanistan to India
5 July 2013



Winning or Failing in Afghanistan Implications of Regional and Global Security



H.E Shaida M. Abdali
Ambassador of Afghanistan to India

Mr. TC Rangachari, Dr. Suba Chandran, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies for hosting our gathering today, and for allowing me to share with you my views on the recent developments in Afghanistan in a regional context, and to discuss your questions afterwards. I'd like to start with a discussion of the Afghan peace process, which has recently captured international headlines.

Let me be very frank and say that the way the Taliban were allowed to hoist the flag of the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," and to open an office in Doha, Qatar, under the same name was an attempt to initiate the division of our country into "fiefdoms," as part of a zero-sum design to ensure strategic depth in Afghanistan.

But as we recall from the 1990s, this effort failed then, it would fail now, and it would fail in the future. It is a dead dream, which Afghans of this generation and future generations would never, ever allow to materialize. These misguided efforts at dividing and ruling Afghanistan have only unified Afghans, who demand a strong centralized government able to defend our sovereignty and territorial integrity against any conventional or unconventional threats.

And that is why the Afghan people and government have strongly and rightfully reacted against the Doha events, which happened in outright violation of the core principles of the agreed-upon Peace Process. The venue in Doha was actually agreed to be a temporary political address where members of the Afghan High Peace Council and authorized Taliban representatives could begin meeting, and then the venue would relocate inside Afghanistan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the premeditated events of Doha, we remain committed to ending the war in Afghanistan that would result in further strengthening of our sovereignty and territorial integrity. That is the basic expectation of the Afghan people, the



victims of more than three decades of war, who continue to fight and die day after day and year after year to ensure the absolute freedom and independence of our country, nothing less.

With that basic fact firmly in mind, the Afghan government and people are cautiously seeking a negotiated settlement with the armed opposition, including the Taliban, based on sincerity and honesty of purpose. And that means an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled peace process where only Afghans talk to Afghans, with non-Afghans only facilitating this at the request of the Afghan government but never try to influence the process towards other directions. This has failed in the past, as I said earlier, and it will fail again.

In that light, we have welcomed the reassurance by President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry to President Karzai of their firm commitment to the Afghan ownership and leadership of the peace process. A day after the Doha drama, the flag and plaque of the Taliban were removed. We have now called on the Taliban to abide by the agreed-upon peace conditions of Afghanistan, before we enter into talks with them.

At the same time, we've welcomed and appreciated the principled reaction of India, the Russian Federation, and a number of other countries, in support of the Afghan peace process. And I should also point out with gratitude the fact that India does not have an Afghanistan exit policy, which HE Minister of External Affairs Salman Khurshid recently stated at the 20th ASEAN Regional Forum meeting in Brunei

Darussalam. Indeed, this is the kind of enduring strategic partnership Afghanistan needs in the region and beyond, in a collective effort to address the problem of terrorism and extremism that continue to find institutional support

and safe havens just across our borders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Many countries led by the United States have made vital contributions towards institutionalization of peace, democracy, and freedom in Afghanistan. They have lost thousands of their military forces and hundreds of their civilian workers in order to maintain international peace and security, which was compromised on 9/11. Twelve years on, with continued international aid, the Afghan people have made significant progress towards their aspiration for a peaceful, democratic, and self-reliant country free from the dark forces of extremism and terrorism.

Let me assure you against the 2014 myth of Afghanistan falling apart after the withdrawal of NATO forces from our country. On June 18th, we took over from NATO the complete leadership and ownership of all military operations across Afghanistan. The Afghan people have welcomed this last phase of security transition, with a positive impact on security conditions in all areas which have come under the protection of the Afghan forces.

We welcome the appropriate role, which NATO has adopted: to train, advise, and equip our strong 350,000 force, ready and willing to defend our country against any state- or non-state aggression. As the press frequently reports, our forces daily frustrate the enemy's complex terrorist attacks on civilians in Afghanistan.

Parallel to the security transition, the Afghan government is striving to ensure the success of our democratic political transition process through implementation of a legitimate presidential election next year on April 5, 2014. As President Karzai recently said in Delhi, his second and last term under the





Constitution is going to come to an end, and rumors that he would remain in office is baseless.

The Lower House of the Afghan Parliament has approved the amendments in the Electoral Law, while the registration process began on May 26 in 41 centers in all 34 provinces for those who have turned 18, have previously not registered, or have lost their voter cards. In the months-long process, 4 million names are expected to be added to the electoral roll, which currently contains 16 million voters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On our strategic partnership with India, President Karzai has paid two visits here within a year, demonstrating the deep, multifaceted ties between our two governments and nations. Last May, the President met with HE President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. They reviewed the progress made under the Afghanistan-India Strategic Partnership Agreement, while assessing Afghanistan's immediate and long-term needs for further expanding security cooperation, in light of the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan. A joint delegation from Delhi will soon visit Kabul to hold bilateral meetings on the way forward.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We renew our call on the international community, particularly our close allies and friends in the region and beyond, to stay the course in Afghanistan. Our gains of the past 12 years should be consolidated through implementation of

win-win objectives, which have been outlined in the Bonn, Chicago, and Tokyo Conferences, as well as through regional initiatives such as the Istanbul Process.

Indeed, winning or losing in Afghanistan squarely depends on whether our allies and friends would actually deliver on the commitments they have made in these conferences and their routine interactions with the Afghan government. We hope they would do so for the reasons, which I would like to explain briefly.

The implications of winning are clear: a sovereign Afghanistan at peace internally and at peace with others focused on win-win objectives towards a region where every nation would be secure and prosper through economic cooperation. This is the world in which we live today, a world which is increasingly interdependent and where zero-sum objectives have proven a failure and a disaster. Sincere, results-oriented cooperation is the call of our peoples in the region and beyond, and Afghanistan stands ready to do our part for the good of all.

In sharp contrast, however, the implications of losing what is a winnable war for peace and justice are also clear in Afghanistan. Any short-cut to peace leads to failure. Such half-measure peace initiatives were tried to engage the Taliban in the 1990s, with disastrous consequences. It neither helped Pakistan nor its allies, which either directly or indirectly supported the same Taliban that victimized the Afghan people, sheltered and aided Al Qaeda to plot and execute from the Afghan soil the tragedy of 9/11. Morally speaking, any attempt to sideline Afghans and undermine their democratic gains of the past 12 years would not only destabilize the region but irresponsibly endanger international peace and security.

Thank you.





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