

# AFGHANISTAN AND THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY LANDSCAPE IN THE REGION

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## Hekmat Khalil Karzai

*H.E. Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*

**H. E. Alev KILIÇ, AVİM Director:** Excellencies, distinguished participants, colleagues, friends, we are honored today with the presence of H.E. Hekmat Khalil Karzai, Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan. I will go into his CV briefly, but before that I want to take the opportunity to mention Turks' feeling towards Afghanistan in a few words.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries Turkey and Afghanistan were established through the signature of Turkey-Afghanistan Alliance Agreement in 1921. Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923. In 1921 what we had was the Government of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and that Turkish National Assembly Government signed only three agreements before the founding of the Republic of Turkey. The very first one was signed with Afghanistan, the second was Russia, and the third was with France. All in 1921, but Afghanistan has this unique privilege in our eyes of having the very first bilateral agreement with Modern Turkey. Turkish Embassy in Kabul whose premises was granted by King of Afghanistan Amanullah Khan was the first diplomatic mission inaugurated in Kabul.

Between 1920-1960 Turkey supported Afghanistan's modernization efforts and played a leading role in the establishment of modern state structures and public institutions in the fields of administration, military, culture, education, and health. Turkish teachers, doctors, officers, and other experts were sent to Afghanistan



between 1932 and 1960. These very close relations and cooperation between the two countries continued until the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR. After the end of the Soviet occupation in 1989, Turkey continued to follow closely the developments in Afghanistan and strived to contribute peace and stability efforts in the country. Currently, Turkey actively supports Afghanistan's efforts in the areas of security development and capacity building.

Today, Turkey continues its contribution in Afghanistan both on a bilateral level and through the efforts of UN and NATO. Contributing to enhancing Afghanistan's relations with its neighbors, also constitute one of the principle aspects of the Turkey's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. In line with this priority Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral summit process was launched in 2007 and İstanbul process was initiated with the participation of Heart of Asia countries in the year 2011. Regarding high level visits, President Erdoğan paid an official visit to Afghanistan in October 2014. It was the first visit from Turkey to Afghanistan at the presidential level after 46 years. President Erdoğan has also been the first head of state who visited Afghanistan following the formation of the National Unity Government in Afghanistan. On this occasion strategic partnership and friendship agreement between Turkey

and Afghanistan was signed. In turn, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan H.E. Eşref Gani Ahmedzai paid an official visit to Turkey in December 2015. So, a brief introduction to what we are talking about the country.

H.E. Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Halil Karzai was the head of the political department at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington D.C. At the ministry in Kabul in 2002, he has shared several national and international processes, forums including Heart of Asia İstanbul process, Regional Economic Cooperation Conference for Afghanistan (RECCA), and International Contact Group (ICG) among others. Mr. Karzai was appointed as a Deputy Foreign Minister in January 2015. He led the Afghan delegations in the first face to face talks with Taliban in July 2015 and at the quadrilateral coordination group, (Afghanistan Pakistan, China and the United States) meetings with a focus on creating enabling environment for the Afghan Peace process. Prior to current appointments, he was the founding director of the center for conflict and peace studies (CAPS). Under his leadership, CAPS became one of the leading research and advocacy centers in Afghanistan and this is the connection now of his presence in AVİM, think-tank to think-tank cooperation between AVİM and CAPS, I would say. Mr. Karzai has been engaged in various international processes with particular emphasis on the peace process and youth empowerment. In 2009, he authored and led the initiative titled "trust building and paving the road for reconciliation".

Mr. Karzai is considered an authority in Afghanistan and has been invited to address the European Parliament and many think-thanks including the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C., now we add AVİM to that. He has lectured in prestigious institutions of higher learning, such as Harvard and Tufts Universities on security and state building. He served as non- resident senior fellow at the East-West Institute in Brussels. Mr. Karzai has written extensively on Afghanistan Security, Terrorism and Insurgency, peace and reconciliation, and his articles have been translated into many languages. He has also appeared on BBC TV Service, CNN International, Al Jazeera among others. We welcome you wholeheartedly.

### **H.E. Hekmat Khalil KARZAI, Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan:**

It is great to be here. After nine visits to İstanbul, this is my first visit to Ankara. I am delighted and it is an honor to be here. I also thank Ambassador Kılıç for those very kind words. I am delighted to be here, I do feel at home because I spent almost seven and a half, eight years being the head of a research center.

Since, this is my first visit to Ankara, I want to say a few words about our relationship with Turkey.



Ambassador was eloquent enough to talk about how historic our relationship is going back all the way to 1919. While he focused on the historic element, I want to focus particularly on what has happened since 9/11. The bond that has been created between Turkey and Afghanistan is one, which is of enormous respect for each other. There is enormous amount of trust between two countries and most importantly between their people. Turkey is seen by Afghans as an all-weather friend. Afghans understand that Turkey is a friend that is going to be around regardless of difficulties and challenges.

Since 9/11, Turkey has contributed enormously to the development and the security of Afghanistan. Turkey has played an extremely important role in NATO. Turkey has taken command in Kabul until today has over 800 soldiers operating in the resolute support capacity. In the past 15 years, we have had almost about 3000 military personnel; they have been trained in certain capacities. We have had almost 2000 female military officers who have been trained here, in Turkey. We have some really competent Afghans who have come here and have been educated and colleagues of my own office have been trained here in one of the most prestigious universities.

On all levels, I think Turkey has contributed to development of our country and for that what I truly want to say and I started our conversation yesterday with the Minister of Foreign Affairs with a sincere gratitude. We, Afghans, are grateful for your friendship. We, Afghans, are grateful for your support and I feel honored to have contributed in small part to further strengthening our partnership. In this regard, I truly feel blessed to be in this capacity.

Ladies and gentleman, what I want to talk about today is really Afghanistan in the region looking at security dynamics, and looking at some political dynamics, looking at the region. In particular, realizing why Afghanistan matters all the way here in Turkey. One would ask: why do we even care about Afghanistan? Why does it matter to us? What is the significance of a country that has been in conflict for the past forty years? What is a matter to you? I wish to tell my colleagues there was a very famous tradition on war. Clausewitz who said that you may not be interested in war but war is interested in you. Sometimes, we use the similar analogy that remain not be interested in Afghanistan, but Afghanistan is always interested in you and always brings you back to the issue.

I want to start with the question: Why is Afghanistan significant? Why does it really matter? Why do we want

to discuss Afghanistan? Let me go back briefly through history. In the 80s, it was an Afghanistan where the Soviet Union came and invaded Afghanistan because of the conflict, enormous amount of chaos and instruction took place. It was also in Afghanistan where the former Soviet Union was defeated. Now, someone would ask who really defeated the Soviet Union. The Arabs, Armenians and the other individuals came to Afghanistan and said it was us who defeated Afghanistan. There were also the American stingers who said it was the American stingers who defeated former Soviet Union. People do not realize that Afghanistan gave over a million martyrs in this conflict. It was the Afghans. Why is that significance today, the defeat of a former superpower? Because there is still a belief today that one superpower was defeated in Afghanistan and today it is an opportunity to defeat another superpower which is the United States. This belief is there. But, after enormous amount of engagement, today Afghanistan is on his way moving forward towards further strengthening its institutions. We have made enormous amount of gains, but today I do not want to talk about the achievements. I want to particularly focus on challenges we face and see how we deal with those challenges and that is significant. Today, if you look at the region of Afghanistan, and particularly Pakistan, it has the highest concentrations of terrorist groups in the entire World. Twenty of the most UN recognized terrorist groups operate in Afghanistan and in the region with Pakistan. I want to briefly describe to you this bigger threat. For us, this threat comes in four circles.

The first threat comes from Afghan Groups. These Afghan Groups who have been operating in Afghanistan, and two groups are named as “*Taliban*” and “*Haqqani Networks*”. There is also a third group, *Hezb-e Islami* which is led by Gulbuddin Hekmetyar. We recently conducted a peace treaty with him. He is now on board and will be coming to Afghanistan in a relatively short period. Briefly, in *Taliban* and *Haqqani Network*, some of you may recall that from 1994 until 2001 the Taliban were in the power. They provided safe sanctuary to *Al Qaida*. There was from Afghanistan with three of the most important terrorist attacks took place. First, it was in 1996, it was the East Africa bombing. The attack in Kenya, in Tanzania took place. Then, there was an attack in Yemen, then lastly 9/11. These were all attacks that financed by *Al Qaida*. Eventually, that was 9/11, that acted with a support of international partners, Taliban were top of it. Taliban went across the border in Pakistan, recovered and created a safe sanctuary for themselves. Now, they are serving, they have become an insurgent group targeting Afghanistan security forces and our international partners.

The second circle that is significant to understand that is and there is a major threat from the second group, Pakistani Group. The Pakistani groups such as *Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan (TTP)*, *Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT)*, *Jaish-*

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*e-Mohammed (JEM)*, and recently developed group called *Jundallah*. These are all groups that are operating on both sides of the line, particularly also targeting Pakistan. Pakistan has also become a victim of terrorism because of these groups, the people of the Pakistan have become a victim.

The third circle are the regional groups. We have groups such as *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)*, *Eastern Turk Islamic Movement (ETIM)* which operated in China. We have also groups such as *Jundallah* which focuses on Central Asia. We have also groups from Chechnya, groups from many of Middle Eastern countries focusing on Afghanistan in the region.

The fourth threat comes from international groups. There are groups that you are heavily familiar with, *DAESH* and *Al Qaeda*. There is a presence of *Al-Qaeda*, but also there is a heavy presence of *DAESH* in our region and particularly in Afghanistan.

I would like to focus on how these groups survive. Some would argue that there has been enormous amount of investment in Afghanistan, in the region. There have been about 150000 foreign troops in Afghanistan. Yet, they are not able to deal with these groups. We have at the stage 2000 Afghan National Security Forces. Yet, these groups are continuing and still able to operate. Why do they continue to survive? There are three reasons: First, we have states in our region. They use terrorism as an instrument of policy. We have states that provide

infrastructure. We have states that provide network and we have states that continue to harbor terrorism. That is the first reason. The second reason: we have a region that enormous amount of resources are provided to these groups. First, we have enormous amount of resources that stem from the drug trade. Afghanistan quite unfortunately is the environment where 50% of the world have own supply that is provided from Afghanistan. The total drug trade ranges all the way between three to five billion dollars. Some of those finances obviously go to militant networks. There are also resources that come from the mining sector. There are also resources that come from taxation and even criminal activities. Criminal activities are many of from kidnapped foreigners. One day, one want to attend these individuals, quite hefty sums and paid millions. Now, many of these groups also have become quite ruthless. They have become quite barbaric. In the past, one of the things that significant was that to a terrorist or to many of these groups, the end objective was to really get their message across, because at the end of the day, a terrorist act was a political act.

Today, what you see is enormous amount of innocent people die. This is happening not just in Afghanistan, in Pakistan. There is also happening in İstanbul, happening on the streets of Ankara. Innocent people are becoming victims. For us, very recently, we had an attack on a hospital. Around 200 innocent people were killed. In here, there were children, there were doctors. The line between attacking a civilian and attacking a military

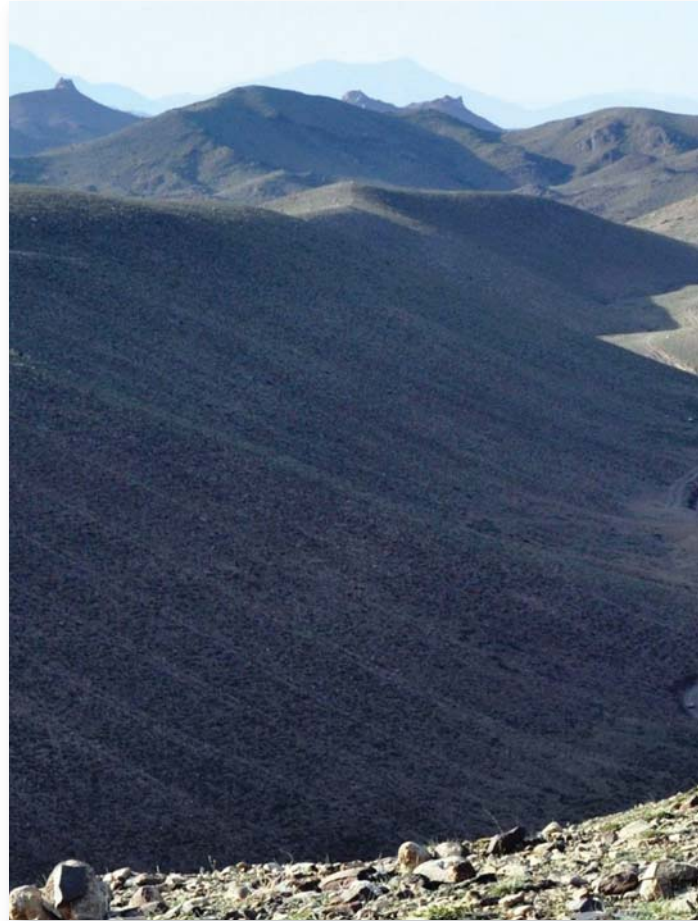
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personnel is diminished. It is a great concern for us. Similarly, the one group has become enormously barbaric is *DAESH*. *DAESH* is a foreign concept for us. It is a group that started to operate in Syria, in Iraq. But, in Afghanistan, it is not the same *DAESH* that you see in that part of the world. Members of *DAESH* are disillusioned young men, disillusion from the Taliban, disillusion from various other groups. Also, about 60% of the composition of *DAESH* come from *Orakzai Agency* in Pakistan for us. What unfortunately has happened for us is that we feel that this is a regional threat and also an international threat. But, quite sadly our response to dealing with this threat, our response to dealing with this security challenges have not been one where we are dealing with this threat in a collective manner. Each state has its own policy, each state has its own preferences. Some states see that there are 'good terrorists' and there are 'bad terrorists'. Those people attacking me 'bad terrorists'. But those, they do not attack me 'good terrorists'. There is distinction between that is something that we do not agree with. We would like to say at the end of the day nurturing terrorists is like creating its own Frankenstein. At the end of the day, they will come after you, and many who have done that they have obviously taken very seriously.

Politically, to shift side a little bit, when fortunately live in a region where the order of the day is zero-sum game.

If one state moves forward, the others feel they have lost. There are enormous amount of rivalries in this region, and these rivalries unfortunately are played in our backyard, in our own hometowns. If there is conflict between United States and Iran, sadly, it has been played out on our territory. If there are challenges between different countries, whether they are India and Pakistan, for example, challenges between Saudi and Iran. How do we deal with all of these? How do we deal with these challenges that are opponents? How do we deal with these security dilemmas, and particularly political dilemmas?

First, I do understand as someone who has studied political philosophy states that do not have friends. It seems states do not have permanent enemies or friends. What do states have? States always have interest. For us, it is important to understand interest of these states and how they operate. Sadly, in our region, there are states who feel that their interest can be gained through non-



state actors and they use non-state actors to get away or to achieve their objectives. But, I do feel that in order to deal with them, states has to have two kinds of approaches: The first is a tactical approach; the second is a strategic approach. The tactical comes in having capability in the military and security intelligence in law enforcement areas. When 9/11 took place and eventually when the Afghan Government was formed, we did not have one single soldier. Yes, we had different groups, we had different parties, but there was not security sector. Today, because of the support of United States and because of the support of particularly NATO in resolute support, we have a very strong security sector of 352 000 police and 2100 strong army. The responsibility falls on that. Also, the most important I feel response for us is the tactical and strategic response. The strategic response is looking at ideological battle that we are dealing with. At times, we feel that many of these people have been brain washed and the only solution is to really kill them. Many military personnel tell you that only solution is a military solution. We completely disagree with this analysis. We feel that there is enormous amount of work we can in the strategic component which is that we must address in the ideological battle that is taking place. We must ask ourselves that if in Afghanistan, if there is indeed Jihad.



Why do not we discuss this? Why do not we look at the religious indoctrination, and analyze if that is the case we would like to have a debate in this context? If Afghanistan is indeed occupied, if the foreign invaders have come in, let's talk about this and analyze this. That we feel strategically most important to deal with many of these groups, particularly local groups is to have a dialogue, is to have a conversation.

For us, since we have been leading efforts on peace and reconciliation, we feel that groups there are of Afghan origins. The only solution to the problem is political reconciliation and political settlement. Groups, they have external objectives. Groups, there are from the outside, *DAESH* and *Al Qaeda*. We have absolutely no desire in having any kind of dialogue with them. What I think really matter with them through the tactical component. It is in this context, Afghanistan has always kept the doors open for the reconciliation, and our doors for reconciliation will continue to be opened. What kind of reconciliation do we want? What kind of peace do we want for the Afghan people? When I negotiate and sit down at the table, I say what is significant for me is that at the end of the day the gains we have gained in the past 15 years, what is about young girls are going to school,

what if about the treat them equally, what if about making states control over territory. But particularly, it is about making sure that many of the gains that are made are not reversed. That is the first component. The second component for us is to make sure that is peace and sustainability. Most peace deals there are made without solid implementations, without actual plan, and fail in the next 5 years and there have been various studies. They have been made on this.

The last component that is also significant, that is quite crucial is also about our ability to deliver to our people. Governments who feel that they are not responsible for the needs of their people do not have a long life. We are not able to survive particularly in our region. Thus, the notion of being responsible and the notion of being able to deliver, the notion of being able to provide good governance is crucial. In many of these issues, we feel that we are in a very critical time because we have gone enormous amount of international presence, from 100 of 50000 troops to about 12000 foreign groups. At the same time, we feel that because of international partners we will be able to move forward, succeed and we will hopefully continue to put up this fight on behalf of the region.