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Endgame in Afghanistan Pakistan advised to keep clear

SLAMABAD: Dec 20: Pakistan believes in total non-intrusiveness on the Afghan issue and has no desire to lead it or be led by it, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Malik Amad Khan stated at a seminar here on Monday.

"Afghans own the Afghan issue. The neighbours can only assist them to resolve it," he told the seminar titled 'Afghanistan Endgame' jointly arranged by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) and United States Institute of Peace (USIP).

"Guns have not worked in the past nor would work in future. There has to be a political solution," he said, stressing that "no ethnic group should be left out in the process of negotiations" for national reconciliation in Afghanistan.

About the militancy inside Pakistan, the minister said Pakistani military and intelligence agencies were tackling it "efficiently and their input in the foreign policy in the existing difficult situation is also proving productive".

Other speakers, including politicians and security experts, believed the endgame in Afghanistan had started and agreed that whatever its outcome, Pakistan should let the Afghan people to decide it.

They stressed that the United States give a clear framework for the withdrawal of Nato forces from Afghanistan. The independent Afghanistan that emerges cannot be a security threat to Pakistan, many experts said.

Begum Abida Hussain, PPP leader and former ambassador to US, said "by improving its relations with Iran and India, Pakistan will be in a better position to deal with the situation emerging in Afghanistan in the days to come".

She suggested that Pakistan set aside the idea of strategic depth and "de-Saudicize itself as it has helped Wahabism flourish in the country".

ANP leader Hashim Babar doubted that Afghan problem would be solved "unless Pakistan looks into its own-self, does soul searching and comes about to a consensus with the powers that matter".

"The solution lies with Pakistan mostly, if not entirely," he said.

Lt-Gen Talat Masood, security analyst, who chaired the event, observed that Afghanistan could become a source of regional and global instability as Afghans would not be able to take care of themselves after the US withd

rawal.

"The leadership in Afghanistan is not cohesive and capable that it could find a solution on its own," he said, adding that "Pakistan must prepare itself and try to stabilise Afghanistan in the best possible fashion".

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■ **ENDGAME IN AFGHANISTAN**

Pakistan should look at post-withdrawal threats

Rasheed Khalid
Islamabad

Pakistan should look at threats, which might emanate after withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. It should prepare itself and try to stabilise the western neighbour in the best possible manner.

The former chief of POF, Lieutenant General (r) Talat Masood, said at the end of a seminar on 'Endgame in Afghanistan' organised by the Centre for Research & Security Studies (CRSS) and United States Institute of Peace (USIP) here on Monday.

Talat said that the endgame has already started as the US and Nato forces are not going to stay there for long. He said that the question is

when this starts and ends and how Afghanistan copes with the situation in the transition period. He said that Afghans would not be able to take care of themselves if they are left on their own and there is a constant fear that Afghanistan can be a source of regional and global instability. He said that Pakistan must also stabilise FATA and the destroyed traditional structures should be rebuilt.

He said that Americans failed to understand the chemistry of the guerrilla warfare and used too much of force leading to their melting away and then re-emerging in other parts. He ruled out any question of winning in the guerrilla warfare. He said that the leadership in Afghanistan is not cohesive and capable to find a solu-

tion on its own. He did not see Afghanistan becoming stable after the withdrawal of the US and the Nato forces. He said that for the stability of Pakistan, Afghanistan should also be stable.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Malik Amad Khan said that Pakistan has everything that a democracy may need like media, opposition, parliament and a vibrant society but media has been portraying a doomsday scenario for nothing. He said that the comfort level between Asif Zardari and Hamid Karzai is much higher and at the same time it is important that no ethnic group should be left out. He said that the military force on its own will not work and there has to be a political solution. He said that guns did not

work in the past and guns would not work in future too.

Former ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi observed that whatever happens in Afghanistan impacts Pakistan. He said that the state structure in Afghanistan is dismantled and war in Afghanistan in the words of General Petraeus would be long. He said that US President Obama is seemingly drifting away from his stated position of withdrawing from Afghanistan in 2011.

Hashim Babar from Awami National Party said that a time has come when we should find solutions in the interest of Pakistan and Afghanistan, as this is a regional war with regional implications.

General (r) Asad Durrani, former DG of ISI, said that any exit strategy

would not happen at the cost of the American and Nato interests no matter how greatly the Afghan army is constructed or trained. He said that a settlement has to come out of a tribal arrangement, as the only solution is to push all legitimate Afghan stakeholders in the room for dialogue.

Ayaz Wazir, former ambassador to Afghanistan, said that Americans are failing and blaming Pakistan for it. He said that the American public is not supporting the incumbent Afghan policy and 73% of the Afghans do not know why the Americans came to Afghanistan.

Professor Salma Malik from Quaid-i-Azam University said that any formula in Afghanistan has to have a push and backing from Pak-

istan. She pointed out that the Afghan policy is being made and run by the military alone and the civilian oversight is missing whereas it should take a lead in chalking out the formula for an Afghan solution.

Imtiaz Gul, head of CRSS, said that Pakistan is central to Obama's Afghanistan policy. He opined that militant groups are rooted in the society in Pakistan and an operation in North Waziristan would kick the hornets' nest in Pakistan. He said that social linkages are complex as the militants are also closely associated with various seminaries scattered all over Pakistan.

Moeed Yousaf said that the USIP should indulge in peace education, conflict resolution, community and national level dialogues.