

Quarterly Round Up

Mr. Usama Bin Ashraf *

Trump Withdraws from Iran Nuclear Deal

President Donald Trump announced its unilateral withdrawal from the hard-won Iran Nuclear Deal also known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on May 8, 2018. He vowed during his election campaign to withdraw the US from Iran nuclear deal and made good on his pledge. He claimed it a “one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made.” The accord, JCPOA, was signed between Iran, United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China and Germany in 2015 that imposes restrictions on Iran’s nuclear weapons program in return for lifting the US and International sanctions against Iran. According to the deal, Iran can only have a stockpile of 300 kg of low-enriched uranium while Iran once had 100,000 kg of highly-enriched uranium. Moreover, it can enrich uranium to only 3.67 percent which is far below the 90 percent that is required to produce a weapon. Furthermore, it can run a minimal number of centrifuges and agreed not to produce Plutonium. Furthermore, it allowed International Atomic Energy Agency inspections under the umbrella of the UN. In return, the economic sanctions on Iran were eased and it was allowed to take part in global trade. The nuclear-related restrictions, as per the deal, will end after fifteen years of the agreement. Donald Trump criticized the deal as it neither included Iran’s ballistic missile program nor asked it to stop its support to Hezbollah of Lebanon and Bashar Al-Asad of Syria. Moreover, he claimed that Iran is not abiding by the commitments it agreed in the deal. Israel’s Netanyahu also played a key role in the withdrawal of US from Iran nuclear deal. Trump decided to withdraw not only against many of his counsel advisers but also of many allies. Secretary of Defence James Mattis argued that despite all the weaknesses in the deal, it was better to stay in. Although Tehran remains in compliance with the deal, Trump announced to impose sanctions not only on Iran but also on firms that do business with Iran. However, other parties to the deal - Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China - have

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decided to keep the deal intact. They are trying to help Iran against American sanctions. The goal of Trump Administration in Iran goes beyond the denuclearization of Iran. Mike Pompeo, the Secretary of State, said that they “want to restore democracy” in Iran.

The US shifts its Embassy to Jerusalem

The United States of America officially opened its most controversial embassy in Jerusalem, a disputed territory under UN Resolutions, on May 14, 2018, thereby breaking the decades-old US policy. Violent clashes erupted along the Gaza border following this illegal controversial decision. Unfortunately, almost 60 Palestinians died and more than 2500 wounded from Israeli gunfire. Historians said that is was the deadliest day for Palestinians since 2014. Earlier the United Nations condemned President Trump’s decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital in December. Now, once again the US received intense international criticism on the opening of this controversial embassy. The United Nations Security Council rebuked Israel over the killings of 60 Palestinian protestors. Pro-Israel politicians, strong Israel lobby in the US along with conservative and evangelical Christians influenced Trump administration to take this controversial bold step. Trump took this action under a 1995 law that bounded the US to shift its embassy to Jerusalem. However, other presidents, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, avoided this decision by signing waivers. Muslim leaders throughout the world not only condemned the US decision but also warned that the move could lead to turmoil.

The Merger of Federally Administered Tribal Areas with Kyber Pakhtunkhwa

The President of Pakistan, Mamnoon Hussian, signed the 25th constitutional amendment bill on May 31, 2018, thereby paving the way for the merger of FATA with KPK. The bill was earlier approved by the National Assembly, Senate and KPK assembly. The president felicitated the people of FATA on this historic development. The process of the merger of FATA with KPK was started in November 2015 when a cabinet-level FATA reforms committee was established. Indubitably, this is an important step by the Government of Pakistan to not only address

the prevailing security issues but also to bring prosperity and development in the region. It will mainstream the tribal areas and bring FATA at parity with other parts of Pakistan constitutionally, administratively, politically, socially, and economically. It is expected that the ethnic, social and cultural cohesion between FATA and KPK will bring administrative and infrastructural and socio-economic development. The vulnerability of the border areas will also be reduced. However, the role of civil society especially the youth of FATA matter a lot in the implementation of these reforms.

Pakistan Taliban Chief Mullah Fazlullah Killed in Drone Attack

The leader of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, declared as an armed terrorist group, was killed in a drone strike, on June 13, in the Kunar Province of Afghanistan. Mullah Fazlullah was at the top of the most wanted list of Pakistan. Mullah Fazlullah was hiding and operating from the forests of eastern Afghanistan since 2009. He led the Swat insurgency of 2007-2009 and masterminded many terrorist attacks against Pakistan including the Army Public School (APS) attack. The counter-terrorism drone strike was carried by the US military in Afghanistan and the Afghan security agencies. A few hours before the strike took place, the Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan, Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa and Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani, hold one-on-one and delegation-level talks. During the talks, Islamabad asked Kabul to handover almost 43 militants including Mullah Fazlullah. Mullah Fazulah became the chief of TTP after the death of Hakimullah Mehsud in a drone strike in November 2013.