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Experts fault Karzai's stance on Crimea

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Some political analysts believe President Hamid Karzai's overnight remarks on Crimea's accession to the Russian Federation are aimed to assert his administration's independence in framing its foreign policy.

Last week, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a treaty making Crimea part of Russia. On Friday, all 155 senators present in Moscow's upper house of parliament voted in favour of the accession treaty.

Late on Saturday, President Hamid Karzai said he respected the outcome of the recent referendum on Crimea's accession to the Russian Federation. He called the referendum the voice of Crimea's people.

The president staked out his position at a meeting with a bipartisan US Congress and Senate delegation, led by Ms. Kelly Ayotte. The bilateral security agreement (BSA), release of prisoners from Bagram jail, regional issues including recent events in Ukraine and Crimea were discussed. While denouncing the referendum, the United States and the European Union are preparing sanctions against Russia, whose forces effectively took control of Crimea in late February after President Viktor Yanukovich fled the country in the wake of violent protests.

Although Afghanistan has long been a US ally, President Karzai's stance is in conflict with the positions of Washington and other major Western capitals. His statement comes as Kabul and Washington continue to differ on the BSA and release of prisoners from the Bagram jail.

Political commentators agree Afghanistan being a sovereign nation reserves the right to pursue good ties with all foreign countries in line with its foreign policy.

One analyst Ghulam Jilani Zwak opined Kabul was not bound to support the US and NATO states in maintaining its international relations. Iran was an arch enemy of the United States, but Afghanistan has close ties with the neighbor.

Zwak said if the United States forces Afghanistan to toe its line on international relations, it would amount to the country's occupation.

Another political commentator, Dr. Faiz Muhammad Zaland, claimed Karzai's stance on Crimea and the situation in Ukraine was not in the national interest. The US and NATO provide civil and military assistance to the country.

The presidential position would plunge the country into a deep crisis, he feared. Karzai has lately his foreign policy focus to China, Russia and India in an attempt to create problems for the US, he continued.

Mohammad Hasan Haqyar, a former journalist and political analyst, said Karzai was in the habit of issuing anti-US statements. Washington was using different options to pressurize him to sign the BSA.

His stance on Crimea is in response to the pressures. He explained Afghan leaders historically looked east when their relations with the West worsened.

Noman Dost, another analyst, said that Karzai was increasingly trying to prove himself an independent leader to the rising generations. The president asserted his independence on visits to Iran, China and Russia.

Important agreements had been signed with the countries in defiance of US concerns, according to Dost, who if USA and NATO scaled down their assistance, Afghanistan would be hurt.