

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



April 16, 2015

The Spirit of Protest

Within a political system, the citizens can bring about changes both by political consciousness and political protests. Political consciousness backs them in comprehending the nature, roles and impacts of the political system and the political protest help them in virtually compelling the government or other political institutions and groups to amend their policies or their activities.

Within a democratic system political protest is the right of all the citizens. If some political groups or even the common people start sensing that their rights are being dishonored or certain policies of the government are affecting them in a negative way they have the right to come out to the streets and let their voices be heard. Nevertheless, there is no agreement on how these protests must be carried out and what kinds of actions should be executed in them. Typically in political protests the involved groups chant slogans, exhibit posters and banners and even make speech. There are some other kinds of protests as well but in short they can be divided into two main categories; nonviolent and violent.

Non-violent and peaceful protests customarily do not include any act of violence and do not harm anyone. They remain confined to slogans, posters, signs, rallies or even hunger strikes. Conversely, a violent or non-peaceful protest turns into violent acts. In such protests it can be observed that the stones are thrown, the public and private belongings are damaged, the policemen are beaten and in certain situations, there are even shootings. Such protest in most of the cases give rise to the injury to several of the participants and may even result in their death.

There are some of the protests that may be termed as non-violent, but display extreme abhorrence and repugnance for the one against whom they have been organized. In such protests, puppets of the targeted personality or the flag of the targeted country may be burnt. Or there may be severest criticism and even abusive language in the slogans or on the placards.

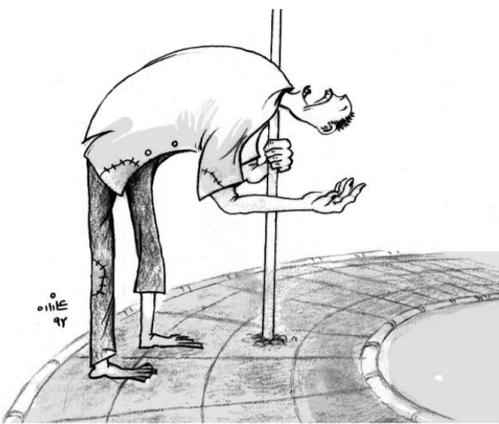
Although all the protests have their impressions, the peaceful protests are thought to have constructive impressions the most. As a matter of fact, the true spirit of protest lies in such kinds of protests. The democratic system, at least in theory, backs and even encourages such protests and considers them the upshot of the mellowness and awareness of the public. Thus, it is essential that the protestors who by organizing the protests display their affection for democracy must also make sure that their protests do not become violent as they may harm many others or their belongings. In that manner their rights would be dishonored and the protestors themselves become the violator of justice.

In some of the situations the protests are deliberately turned violent. Some of the political groups or even the criminal and the terrorist groups in order to achieve their own filthy interests attempt to make the protests violent. In the countries where people do not have a long history of democratic protests and there are not many educated people, there are great chances that the protests turn violent. As people are not democratically mature, they do not have any idea when they go out of control. And when they come to their senses they have already done great damage to themselves and to the society.

The example of Afghan society can be taken in this regard. There have been many occasions when Afghan people have started with peaceful protests but have ultimately turned them into very violent ones. They turn so much violent that they start harming their own policemen. In so many other cases they have attacked the bases and offices of the foreign countries and have tried to bring loss to them. Yes, there are likelihoods that they may be protesting for something very serious.

Furthermore, it is also important to take into consideration that the protests that are carried out against other countries, should be organized very much sensibly. It is a requirement of prudent diplomacy to keep our relations strong with other countries, specifically with the neighboring countries. Unquestionably it is our right to protest against the policies of the other countries that may bring harm to us or against such policies that are not carried out formally and influence us in some way or the other; nonetheless, it is also important that in what manner we carry out our protest.

Policies designed by a government in a country are not everlasting. They keep on altering and with the changing nature of the political situations the governments keep on changing their attentions and their concerns. Hence, the pertinent policies of the relevant countries should be protested against, and that should not disregard the state as whole. It may be pretty possible that the people of that country may be very near to us regarding their culture, custom and ideology. Besides, it is also probable that the policies of the country may change for better and then we would have to change our opinion.



The New Chapter for Peace Talks with the Taliban

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

During his thirteen years of ruling Afghanistan, former president Hamid Karzai spared no efforts to bring Taliban leaders to table of peace negotiations. But he failed in reaching out to the Taliban and convincing Pakistan to help the Afghan government in its efforts for peace. The reasons behind the long-lasting Kabul peace efforts are many. But the most crucial factor that failed Hamid Karzai's government in its peace efforts was its inability to seek a solution through regional integrity that includes major players such as Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia as well as the United States. President Karzai's lacked a cohesive strategic approach towards the talks with the Taliban as well as relations with Pakistan.

Since coming to power, the National Unity Government (NUG) quickly moved to prepare the ground in order to kick-start the peace process. President Ashraf Ghani made the talks with the Taliban his top priority. Along with rebalancing of Afghanistan's foreign policy aimed at benefiting peace efforts, the government of Afghanistan also sought national consensus over the new government's approach towards Pakistan and negotiations with the Taliban. With the unity government determined in starting a fresh round of efforts for peace, there were widespread skepticisms to Kabul sudden shift of foreign policy towards Islamabad. The government of Afghanistan quickly moved to assure Afghan political elite that the efforts are heading into the right direction.

Since the National Unity Government (NUG) is formed in Kabul, Afghanistan has drastically changed its attitudes towards Pakistan, who is believed to have the ultimate influence over the Afghan Taliban. Unlike Hamid Karzai, who used to openly criticize Pakistan, the leaders of the unity government have sought much more friendly relations with Islamabad. Since last year, the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan quickly improved and Afghan officials have made several high-profile trips to Pakistan. As result of the thaw in relations between Kabul and Islamabad, Pakistan's powerful military suggested its full backing to the Afghan-led peace efforts. As result of the new approach in Kabul, Afghanistan has been able to improve relations with Pakistan and securing its backing and cooperation in persuading the Taliban to come to peace negotiations with the government of Afghanistan.

With the new Afghan-led peace efforts getting momentum, all major players now seem to be on the same page in helping Afghanistan to resume negotiations with the Taliban. As a milestone for Afghanistan's peace-oriented foreign policy, China announced its willingness to help in restarting talks with Taliban. China's role is viewed crucially important in this regard as it has close relations with Pakistan and is one of the major donor countries to Pakistan. Building up on the rebalancing of foreign policy, the unity government leaders made a high-profile visit to Washington this month, seeking the United States long-term commitment and support for Afghanistan's security and the efforts for peace negotiations with the Taliban. In the very initial days of coming to power, President Ghani moved quickly to repair the damaged relations of Afghanistan

and the United States by signing the security agreement. These efforts aligned the dominant foreign players to back Afghan peace negotiations with the Taliban.

The history of Afghan government's peace efforts have many lessons for the new government to learn from. Without a regional approach and a peace-oriented foreign policy, the talks go nowhere. Former president Hamid Karzai never could take a shared approach towards peace negotiations with major players such as the United States and Pakistan. The government of Afghanistan and the United States each foiled each other's attempts to embark on negotiations with the Taliban. This was while Pakistan felt it had been given to sufficient role by both the US and the government of Afghanistan in the efforts to bring the Taliban leaders to table of peace negotiations. As result of a cohesive and shared approach, which resulted from Afghanistan's diplomacy, the fledgling negotiations between the US and the representatives in Qatar collapsed after President Karzai severely criticized foreign countries, particularly the US, of advancing their own secret agenda in the Qatar initiative.

As the new chapter of the a decade and half war in Afghanistan started and the bulk of US-led NATO alliance withdrawn, conditions have changed not only for the government of Afghanistan but also for the Taliban and its allied groups. The Taliban have been suffering from internal rifts and the field commanders of the groups have been increasingly being alienated with the core leadership of the militant group, the Quetta Shura. As result, many of the Taliban members seem exhausted with the prolonged war and many others shifting alliance to the newly emerging Islamic State, or the Daesh. Due to this chaotic situation for the Taliban war campaign, the Taliban leadership view the group highly vulnerable with the event the IS group and the prolonged war with the Afghan government. This has brought the Taliban leadership, at least the more moderate members, to seriously ponder over the course and the outlook of the group's militant campaign.

The new challenges on the ground as well as the new US-led Resolute Support mission to support Afghanistan security forces have led the Taliban to think that they may not be able to win the war militarily. The recent moves seen from the Taliban may be interpreted in this context. A Taliban delegation made a trip to China this year which meant Taliban reaching out to regional players who is going to play a key role in negotiations between the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban. And recently the Taliban released a biographic essay of its leader Mullah Mohammad Omar. The move was interpreted as Taliban effort to consolidate power by its leadership before any kind of peace talks with the government of Afghanistan.

In conclusion, the time has come for peace talks with the Taliban. And the government of Afghanistan is facing a key test whether or not it will be able to end the war through a peace deal with the militant groups.

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Decade Long War Earned Multiplying Casualties!

By Asmatyari

As the spring drew nearer amidst the rumors of peace talk, the magnitude of violence and insecurity practically soared. The consecutive attacks on public officials depict either state's unwillingness to restrict the militants away from commercial and residential areas or have let the militants operate at will. Every time a tragic incident occurs the fatless civilian or public officials have to pay the price by serving sacrifices.

Owing a weak and influentially plagued net of jurisprudence, the militants and insurgents are developing a new reputation: not just as agents of terrorism but as drug lords and agents of criminal activities including kidnapping, people trafficking and smuggling. It is evident that the insurgents further their evil agendas by exploiting the sacred name of Islam, seems to be wholly responsible for earning extremists fame for the adherents of this religion in general and Afghanistan in particular. The aforementioned narrative is a true manifestation of the religion of peace and audacious step forward must be taken to undermine the extremist cause the insurgents are striving for. Nonetheless, the militants intensify their attacks whilst abducting civilians to get them exchanged with their imprisoned fellows.

Violence has been a dominant phenomenon browbeating every fabric of Afghan society. The fight between insurgents and government backed international allies seems unending provided civilians are not ended. The proverb "Grass suffers in the battle bulls" accurately justifies the worsened state of civilian left on the brunt of attack ongoing between government, terrorist and insurgents. The state of affairs furthers until a congenial solution is not sought out. Political solution and ground battles are the tow course that end up the bloody battle.

Earlier, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) painted a bleak picture whilst releasing its first quarter report for 2015, showing a continuing trend of record high civilian casualties, with deaths and injuries from ground engagements in Afghanistan as the leading cause. Nicholas Haysom, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, said in a statement: "With the seasonal resumption of higher levels of conflict-related violence, the United Nations urges all parties to the conflict to take all necessary measures to protect civilians."

In the first three months of 2015, civilian casualties from ground engagements rose by eight percent compared to the same period in 2014. Ground fighting between Pro-Government Forces and Anti-Government Elements caused 521 civilian casualties (136 civilians killed and 385 injured). Between 1 January and 31 March, UNAMA documented 266 civilian casualties (62 deaths and 204 injured) from mortars and rockets, up 43 percent from the same period last year and accounting for half of civilian casualties from ground engagements, the statement read. Civilian casualties from aerial operations by international military forces declined 42 percent compared to the first quarter of 2014, with 15 civilian casualties (seven civilian deaths and eight injured) recorded from 1 January to 31 March 2015. The long course we advanced, could earn us nothing, except the rule of nuisance, wicked deeds, widespread manipulation of power, suppression of oppressed and endless tales of barbarism against powerless segment of society. According to UNAMA, they documented overall 1,810 civilian casualties (655 deaths

and 1,155 injured), a two per cent decrease from the same period in 2014. The report states that the latest figures show a continued rise in women casualties with an increase of 15 percent in the same period last year. Conflict-related violence killed 55 women and injured 117. Child casualties surpassed the unprecedented levels recorded last year with 430 child civilian casualties (123 deaths and 307 injured).

The armed forces carrying out clean up operation or insurgents retaliating, the innocent civilians are left to pay the price. In the ongoing tit-for-tat between armed forces and insurgents, unarmed civilians are left to render endless and futile sacrifices that never lead to fruition and bring them aversion of ill-fates.

This fact tallies with UNAMA report stating "anti-government elements remained responsible for the largest proportion of total civilian casualties at 73 percent, with pro-government forces responsible for 14 percent and seven percent attributed to both parties. Responsibility could not be attributed for six percent of civilian casualties, caused mainly by explosive remnants of war".

With exception to fallacy of government displaying ineligibility reversing the attack, Taliban are equally responsible for civilian casualties. Taliban seeking refuge in nearest village endangers the lives of unarmed civilians did not restricting them doing this, is unjustifiable disposition worthy of loud condemnation with inclusion to Afghan forces led air raid. Significantly, the pursuit of tit-for-tat that made Taliban launch attacks on innocent local or foreign nationals is equally condemnable act. The Taliban claimed responsibility for 48 incidents of targeted killings, including deliberate killings of tribal elders, judges, prosecutors and civilian government workers. "The United Nations calls on the Taliban to cease all attacks against persons who are not taking a direct part in hostilities," said Georgette Gagnon, Director of Human Rights for UNAMA. "The UN notes that direct attacks on civilians are strictly prohibited under international law which binds all parties to the conflict and may amount to war crimes."

Everybody extends deep concerns over escalating civilian casualties and deteriorating state of law and order in this piece of land. It worth mentioning the government has too displayed incompetence devising policy and strategy to combat the insurgency. What all it has done is greater reliance on international community and US to sort out a congenial solution for its core issues. President during his stay urged US to get their withdrawal plan slowed down in the wake of growing fear of emergence of ISIS in Afghanistan. However, the evil forces tend to play evil practices to get government surrender at their demand.

The militants apprehended must be subjected to a fair trial is a pivotal to maintenance of peace and security. Long lasting peace can only be installed in Afghanistan provided the anti-state elements are brought to book through fair trial, holding the right culprit accountable for his deeds. In doing so the government should too consider the wages and authority of public officials serving this department, so that they shouldn't be misled by attractive offers. The government must get itself cleared, whom to be labeled as terrorists, whom should be talked to and whom should not? It should be learned that both the formation of fair laws, its implementation and regulation makes it possible for men to live together peaceably.

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