

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



April 24, 2017

A Triangle of Challenges Engulfs Government

Tragic incidents of murder make frequent headlines in Afghan newspapers. The Taliban fighters seek to intensify their attacks, especially in spring season. Afghan soldiers and civilians' suffering and anguish continue unabated despite government's repeated calls for peace. The protracted war filled the nation with a strong sense of disappointment. The heart-wrenching stories of riddled bodies of men, women and children hardly provoke the world's sympathy for their endless continuation.

Taliban's deadly attacks have outraged Afghans' conscience. It is likely that there is no room for truce or reconciliation with the Taliban outfit. Warring factions are still of the opinion to either impose their warped minds on individuals with the barrel of gun or simply kill them via suicide bombings and fatal attacks. The militants' fundamental ideology - which has been engendered by violence, parochial mindset and intolerance - knows no human and moral boundaries.

In other words, the militant fighters are radicalized in the strongest possible way and know nothing except for shooting and killing. The National Unity Government (NUG) is hoped to show zero tolerance towards the Taliban's heavy offensives and put an end to the High Peace Council (HPC) - which was established in 2010 to bring the Taliban elements to the negotiating table - for no tangible result.

The NUG encounters with three major challenges. First, the Taliban outfit puts pressure on the state through continuing its guerilla-style fighting. Even though the government has intensified its attacks against the Taliban, the door for negotiation is left open for them. Moscow Conference was held on April 14, to underline the reconciliation process and Russia offered to host peace talks between the Taliban and Kabul. However, the Taliban carried out one of the deadliest attacks a week after the conference, on April 21, to signal their refusal to hold talks with the government. The Friday's assault on an army base in the northern Balkh province has reportedly killed 140 and wounded 160 people, for which the Taliban claimed responsibility. The last major attack against a military site in Afghanistan was in early March when fighters disguised as doctors stormed the Sardar Daud Khan hospital - Kabul's largest military hospital - killing dozens.

Afghan security forces, beset by killings, desertions and non-existent "ghost soldiers" on the payroll, have been struggling to beat back the Taliban since US-led NATO troops ended their combat mission on December 2014. The US watchdog SIGAR says that casualties among Afghan security forces rose by 35 percent in 2016, with 6,800 soldiers and police killed.

Second, the ISIL group has gained firm foothold in the country. ISIL attempts to stoke sectarian violence through targeting ethnic minority groups on the grounds of their race, color and creed.

It also radicalizes and coerces people into joining its group. To react against the ISIL's destructive role, the US military dropped its largest non-nuclear bomb on its hideouts, on the eve of Moscow Conference, in eastern Afghanistan, killing nearly a hundred militants.

Third, there is mistrust among Afghan officials within the government's apparatus. Following the removal of Ahmad Zia Massoud, who held the position of the Special Representative of the President of Afghanistan in Reform and Good Governance, officials' exchanges of rhetoric widened a gap among authorities. Massoud, however, strongly rejected the dismissal saying his appointment had come as part of deal and that Ghani had no right or power to sack him. He is said to have launched consultations with different political blocs on setting up a transitional government. "President Ghani should quit and the transitional administration will be tasked to pave way for holding presidential and parliamentary elections," he is cited as saying. In addition to this, a tension broke out between Ghani and his first deputy Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum earlier which went viral in national and international media. Dostum repeatedly complained that he had been sidelined and had no authority as First Vice President. He is believed to be totally incapacitated after the tension.

Now the NUG will have to deal with the aforementioned challenges. The Taliban have intensified their attacks, whereas the ISIL group is undermined following the said bomb. It is self-explanatory that with the intensification of Afghanistan's military attack against the Taliban that inflicted heavy casualties on them - their high-profile leaders were also among the dead - they took revenge. It is a principal all around the world that a nation will not gain victory without devoting its life.

However, the government is expected to give no chance for the guerilla fighters to carry out such massive attacks, especially in the heart of an army base. The state must reinforce the country's intelligence besides intensifying the military deal so as to foil similar assaults.

Moreover, the mistrust within government's machinery will not only pave the ground for warring parties to fish in the troubled waters but also widen the rift between state and nation. To put it succinctly, disagreement among the officials will push the country into further violence. They have to put an end to their disagreements. Considering all the aforementioned challenges, the government is supposed to tackle them forthwith or else the nation's sufferings will never come to an end.

Talibanic Theology and Generating Mind of Killing

By Mohammad Hedayat

The massacre of Afghan National Army (ANA) in the 209 Shahin Corps of Mazar-e-Sharif was part of Talibanic political theology. The most significant aspect of this massacre - which stems only from mind of killing and Talibanic theology - is the death of unarmed soldiers by terrorists, while offering prayer. No stone-hearted individual is believed to create such a tragedy unless cherishes theological mind of killing, theology will justify this act. This massacre unmasked the Talibanic theology again.

Theological mind is in the center and highest point of one's beliefs. There is nothing superior to deity for a religious individual. In other words, the top and highest point for a believer, in any religions, is where their deity exists. All acts and practices will be done based on dos and don'ts attributed to deity. In theological and theocratic systems, deity is with the characteristics of playing the role of positivity or negativity. That is to say, a pious person will act or hold out against an action with reference to deity's positive or negative role. A theocratic and pious man will never act without attributing to an obligatory source. The obligation which originates from deity and its rule over the universe is the strongest.

The mentality of political theology maintains the message that the secular life of mankind in modern world, like theological doctrines, is in the realm of as strong certainty and obligation as faithful men breathe in the dominion of deity. Carl Schmitt was the first person who combines both theology and politics and interprets the obligation and certainty of political issue. He believes that all significant concepts of modern state are the secularized concept of deity - not because of their historical development that their status was changed from theology to the theory of government and by which, for example, the absolute Almighty God has changed into absolute legislator - due to its systematic structure that knowing these concepts is essential for Sociological Study.

However, there must be no relations between politics and theology according to classical philosophic thought - theology regulates the relations between deity and mankind, whereas politics regulates men's relations with one another. But, for the first time, Schmitt attributes the political and legal rules, prevailing in men's life, to theology and seeks their fundamental bases in theological beliefs.

He believes that the core of politics' metaphysics, which provides the theoretical basis of modern government, is strongly supported by theology. Despite the theory of enlightenment that a society is founded on "social contract", Schmitt believes that theology is in the center of social life; theological propositions form social structure; and draw a line between friend and foe.

It should be noted, however, that Schmitt did not intend to prescribe a religious state and combine religion and politics so that religion dominates each and every thing. He, through assimilating theological and political systems, seeks to point out that how men's mindsets still prefer obedience. According to Schmitt, when state - whether or not is based on public votes and democratic system - decides, kind of miracle takes place. As miracle in religion is nothing except for event

against rules and natural law. The state's decision in exceptional and urgent cases where law is silent, means that the state is omnipotent and a unique decision-maker. This exclusivity and exceptionalism demonstrates the state's domination and power and likens the state to deity. Hence, the order arising from national sovereignty and modern government can be the symbol of the order prevailing in religions via theology.

One of the statement regarding the relativity between political theology and violence is made by Slavoj Zizek which is written in his book entitled 'Violence; Five Peeks'. The deity's violence seems to be taken from Hage's "Lord and Servant" but the contents are close to the idea of Walter Benjamin. According to Benjamin, the deity's violence is the strongest and harshest one since the destructive power of deity dominates all powers, including the power of law.

Inspired by Benjamin, Zizek compares the violence of deity with legendary violence as he says that deity is opposite to legend, and its violence will be in conflict with legendary violence. If legendary violence is law maker, the divine power will be law destroyer. If the first creates borders the second will destroy them in unlimited way.

If legendry violence finds out both fault and atonement, the divine violence will only erases the sin. If the first threatens, the second will blow. If the first is bloody, the second will be deadly without shedding blood. Zizek believes that those who are slayed by deity's violence, they will be sinful rather than victim since they do not worth sacrifice and the acceptance of deity. Based on this assumption, the distance between subjective and objective violence is too long to have human relationship.

Now it is likely that the political theology has come to spotlight in a true manner. The fundamental groups, which have emerged around the globe under the aegis of religion, view theology from political outlook and vice versa and kill people under the name of God. The dialectics of theology and politics, which emerged in a paradoxical process, is kind of system's subjectivity that has been institutionalized in the mindsets of fundamental groups - this does not necessarily belong to Islamic fundamental group but such groups are found in any religions. The fact is that the geography of violence and terror under the name of Islam is far wide than anywhere else. The political theology is the most significant means for justification lies in the Taliban's violent logic. The political theology acts as device producing mindset of killing and violence in the heart of Taliban's beliefs.

The incident of Shahin Corps and massacres of those who were worshipping will not be justified but by the Taliban's device of theological killing. The most important feature of political theology is the illustration of symbolic order that has been changed into subjective order by its believers. The Taliban's theology brings out nothing other than destructive and deadly system. The massacre of Afghan National Army is one of the signs actualizing the symbolic order illustrated in the Taliban's theology.

Mohammad Hedayat is the Editor in Chief of the Daily Afghanistan Ma. He can be reached at thedailyafghanistan@yahoo.com

Enlisting Women in Africa's Health Fight

By Matshidiso Moeti

Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) disproportionately affect women and girls. Female genital schistosomiasis (FGS) alone causes severe pain, bleeding, and lesions in more than 16 million women and girls in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Beyond causing widespread physical suffering, NTDs have a severe long-term socioeconomic impact on millions of women and girls. Women who have been scarred or disfigured from diseases such as FGS and lymphatic filariasis are often stigmatized to the point that they are unable to marry or are abandoned by their spouses. And even though disfigurement and social stigma are not lethal conditions, they can cause or exacerbate psychological disorders and limit the opportunities women and girls have.

Since 2000, enough pharmaceuticals for five billion preventive treatments against NTDs have been donated. And many people now recognize that controlling, and eventually eliminating, NTDs will be essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which apply to such diverse areas as nutrition, education, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, and economic growth. Because the SDGs are based on the principle of "leaving no one behind," they cannot be considered a success until they have been met everywhere, and for all people - including women and girls.

SDG 5, in particular, calls for the world to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" by 2030. Gender equity applies to both sexes, but special attention is needed to improve conditions for women and girls. In Africa, women are often disenfranchised, even though they account for more than half of the continent's population. To ensure that they are not forgotten, we need to improve our understanding of how gendered power relationships operate, and address those social dynamics head on.

Because women and girls in their childbearing years suffer disproportionately from the health and social effects of NTDs, it is critically important that they be included in any large-scale health-policy interventions that are proposed. And, beyond making women the focus of NTD programs, we should acknowledge that they will play a central role in advancing the sustainable development agenda.

We need to empower women and girls to promote and lead social-mobilization efforts in Africa. Women are front-line partners for public-health advocates who are working

to make essential medicines available across the continent. Moreover, women can help to control NTD vectors at the source, by ensuring that all members of their community are complying with anti-NTD drug distribution and treatment programs.

Ongoing efforts to control and eliminate NTDs in Africa have made some progress. But the time has come to develop more innovative policy tools. We urgently need integrated, inter-programmatic, and inter-sectoral approaches that address NTDs' social, economic, and etiological dynamics. And we will need the full participation of the most vulnerable communities. Without that, no program aimed at ultimately eradicating NTDs can succeed.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the World Health Organization's Roadmap to eliminate NTDs, and of the London Declaration on Neglected Tropical Diseases. It is encouraging to see that the international community is recognizing not only the disproportionate burden that NTDs place on women, but also the essential role that women play in controlling and eradicating these diseases.

Now that an ever-growing international partnership has emerged, we have a unique opportunity to put an end to these debilitating diseases once and for all. In 2016, the WHO Regional Office for Africa launched the Expanded Special Project for Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (ESPEN), which provides African countries with technical assistance and fundraising tools to fight the five NTDs that can be preempted with preventive chemotherapy: onchocerciasis, lymphatic filariasis, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, and trachoma.

ESPEN is an effort to bring together governments, the global public-health community, and other stakeholders. Our goal is to strengthen partnerships that are designed specifically to eliminate NTDs. Toward that end, ESPEN is actively supporting national-level anti-NTD programs that have been established to break the cycle of poverty that NTDs cause and sustain. As the WHO works toward achieving the SDGs, we will continue to foster participatory approaches that include the most vulnerable populations - especially women and girls - in the fight against disease. Ultimately, the only way to ensure long-term success is to empower those who are most affected. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Matshidiso Moeti is Regional Director for Africa at the World Health Organization.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwida

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.