

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



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The Challenges of Integration in Afghanistan

After the defeat of Taliban, it was expected that Afghanistan would leave instability and disorder behind it and would start its journey towards a democratic system. It was also expected that the different ethnicities would strive to forget the bitter history of civil war and would ultimately integrate into a nation. Defeating the insecurity and making honest efforts for this purpose was the most basic requirements; however, they could not be experienced within the ranks of the government and other authoritative officials and as a result now we can observe that insecurity has returned to the country and national integration and harmony are nowhere to be found.

Installation of a National Unity Government (NUG) also proved to be an over-optimistic step in this regard. Soon after its formation, differences could be found prevalent among its members and today they have reached to an alarming level. The members of NUG blame each other of discrimination on the basis of ethnic favoritism. And, these differences are not only between the members of the two teams; rather they are now prevalent among the members of the same team as well. This has done a great damage to the prospects of integration and harmony within the Afghan nation as a whole.

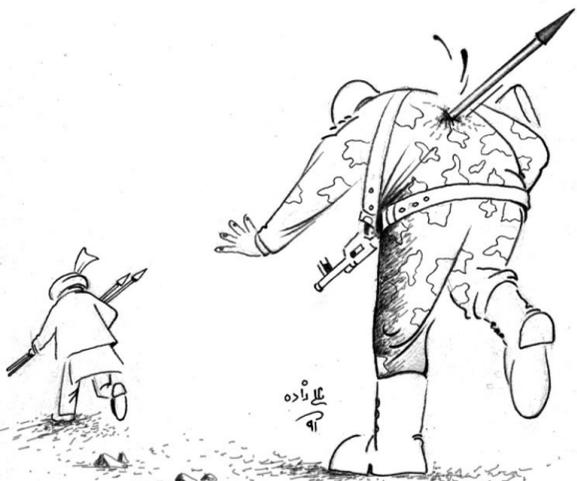
Thus, it is not a secret now that political and other issues seem to be intermingling, and the ambiguities, uncertainties and current distrust have made optimistic thinking very much difficult. It would not be inappropriate or even critical if someone says that the future is dark, the vision is non-existent and the country is heading towards disorder and disintegration.

A political solution in Afghanistan - which is really important for the integration of Afghan society - is not very close and the present attitude of Afghan government and its Western allies are further hindering the process. The reconciliation with Taliban seems to be out of track and the Afghan people do not appear to be having confidence about the outcome of any such process. On many occasions Western decision-makers have agreed that a lasting solution for Afghanistan is not through war; it is political solution alone that has the hope of stability in the country, yet the measures have not been carried out appropriately in the same direction. Instead of the process being participatory and inclusive, it has been the reason of widening the gap between Afghan people and the Western allies and the current situation is making sure that this gap should keep on increasing. Moreover, the process is also widening the gap among the different ethnic groups within the Afghan society - further disintegrating the society. Though it is not possible that the reconciliation process alone may generate a sort of reintegration within Afghan society, it may, to a certain extent, prove helpful to it, provided that it is handled with prudence. However, at the same time, it must never be forgotten that the integration is quite a different phenomenon and require attention and devotion of its own. It is largely dependent on the political system and socio-economic environment prevalent within Afghan society.

For the reintegration of Afghan society it is necessary that all the major social, political and ethnic groups within the Afghan society must start feeling a sense of attachment with the social, political and economic lives of the country.

The integration of the Afghan society is only possible through a separate process - it can neither be the outcome of a miracle nor the result of reconciliation process alone. At the present scenario, even it seems improbable that the reconciliation process may reach to any sort of viable agreement with Taliban, let alone the integration of the entire nation. For making integration possible, it is necessary to bring about some very basic structural changes within the Afghan political setup. One of the most basic of them is a true democracy within the country that has the capacity to represent different ethnic and minority groups appropriately so that heterogeneous Afghan society must be integrated within a single whole.

Different ethnic and minority groups will not be integrated within the society if they are kept away from participating within the affairs of the country and the most crucial decisions of the nation. Therefore, it can be said that the integration process is a two-fold process. Along with making these groups the part of the ongoing reconciliation process, there have to be important political amendments within a short span of time; otherwise, neither integration will take place nor will reconciliation produce any fruitful outcome. In fact, the integration of Afghan society is a phenomenon that is much wider than the reconciliation process. For it to happen; there has to be consistent efforts and a true democratic system assisted with socio-economic stability and cultural integration. At the moment, it is one of the factors that will have a very important influence on the future of integration process in Afghanistan but it is important that the process must be led keeping the benefits of the nation as a whole in mind. Integrating all the important factions of Afghan society within an effective political system will definitely result in a promising episode in integration of Afghan society.



Peace and Sustainable Community

By Mohammad Eshaq Arifi

One of the main purposes of the United Nation for development is peace, justice and sustainable community. This was also a key issue for Afghanistan National Youth Symposium which came to spotlight in the solar year of 1-2-1396. It seems that peace is more of a cultural and intellectual issue rather than of a political or legal one and is based on particular epistemological sequence that emerge in society as social, political and legal attitude. This concept will be illustrated if compared with violence and social, political and legal avoidance.

Violence, which results in death and destruction, is the reflection of intellectual and mental status of individuals or communities that seek to get their social, political and economic purposes or get their life and dreams at the cost of violence or denying others.

To put it another way, they will kill others to gain their position, force others out of a status to own their status and remove them from any possible arenas to step in them. According to violent individuals and communities, this issue will give the desired fruit when epistemological and ethical foundations are provided and theorized for their violent practices.

Therefore, to justify violent practices in Islamic societies, some schools of thought have resorted to theological categorization such as: Muslim, infidel, monotheism, pagan and so on as main theory behind violence.

With the comparative study of peace and violence, we will come to understand that peace, as a strategic need, will achieve its ethical and human goals if its intellectual ground is paved, the society is familiarized with its characteristics, purposes and outcomes, and gain the necessary theoretical and analytical sequences.

Promoting the value of peace and peaceful coexistence, with persuasive and moral arguments, will be time-consuming but fundamental and effective that can smooth the path for peace and peaceful life and root out violence and destruction.

Focused on this goal, transforming and causing change in individuals and communities' outlook and mentality are necessary in two aspects: in the level of general education and vocational and professional education.

In the level of general education, first, long-term strategy should be planned for bringing peace through supporting the country's training field educationally and monitoring closely the contents of educational texts and curriculum.

This will be the most critical stage for institutionalizing

peace and establishing peaceful and sustainable community. That is to say, it forms the mentality for peace and supports peace-loving mindset. Second, monitoring closely the contents of curriculum and educational texts will catalyze the process for establishing a peace-loving society. To include peace in educational curriculum in primary, secondary and high schools, will be one of the most effective way to establish social order and ensure peace in our country.

Therefore, peace, as strategic issue, should be included in all educational curriculums in the aforementioned schools. The subjects such as history, social science, geography, and mainly the Islamic science are the sources that can make the cornerstone of peace-centered society and cause fundamental changes in terms of peaceful life across the country.

It is worth mentioning that religious subjects and Islamic science are the best educational capacities. Moreover, these subjects, which are backed by religious theory, contain the most instrumental concepts for peace and peace-making and change the minds and mentalities of students for better.

It is deemed significant, while some or all national and international violence backed by religious theory - which has embroiled the human societies in unique fear, disappointment, destruction, and mental disorder. The opposite is also true. The positive effect of religious, peaceful teachings in enlightening the minds and mentalities of students are beyond doubt. In short, the positive aspect will work out at the magnitude of its negative aspect and have the same effect and influence.

Hence, the Afghan government - mainly the Ministry of Education and Culture, Religious Affairs, and Human Rights Commission and other organizations - will have to constitute a committee from students of social science, students of psychology and mainly the students of Islamic science and support them financially.

In other words, the said institutions are supposed to include the issue of peace in educational curriculum of primary, secondary and high schools. It goes without saying that if long-term and strategic policies and schemes are not planned and implemented, the country's peace and stability will be threatened forever. In brief, peace, development and social life will continue to be jeopardized if the subject of peace is not included in schools' curriculum.

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Parliament: Center for Rational Discussions or Routine Intimidations

By Naser Koshan

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

In this day and age, legislatures are meant to be venues for indulging in rational debates, maintaining decency and self-esteem among members. A pragmatic and forward thinking assembly has the power to keep the executive branch in check, and undoubtedly change the course of its unviable policies. It is utterly important for any country to have a merit based system in place, filtering and rejecting uneducated and unqualified candidates, eyeing seats in parliament.

Historically, Afghanistan has had a reasonable history of succeeding parliaments in its good old days, during the reign of the late king, Mohammad Zahir Shah, it was the parliament that initiated the first modern Afghan constitution, subsequently allowing the activities of the then banned left wing political parties.

Since then, Afghanistan has experienced a devastating civil conflict, ruining almost every bit of its socio-economic infrastructures, post Bonn conference, the country adopted liberal democracy as its form of governance; the new Afghan constitution necessitated the establishment of a broad based, multi ethnic and fully representative national assembly.

An assembly expected to gradually turn into a powerful house, capable of bringing the war-torn country together, and retain independence when it comes to performing their indentured duties.

The prevailing Afghan parliament has adopted all the facial structural of a modern legislature, it has almost as many legislative committees as a U.S. congress may have, but it falls short when it comes to having patrons with the right expertise, and know how to draft legislations within the best interest of their constituents.

Not to mention, a businessman is setting on the foreign relations committee, while a merely literate tribal influential is chairing the oversight committee on executive branch.

Regrettably, the resident MPs have turned the parliament into an ethnic battleground igniting an unwanted Diaspora among ordinary citizens, who normally give a cold shoulder to such cynical mindsets. Unfortunately, constructive political debates and rational approach to many critical issues is replaced by frequent personal attacks, and badmouthing each other in parliament.

They have miserably failed in focusing their time and energy in fertile discussions, let alone addressing the very basic essence of their job description, that is drafting legislatures and constant oversight on executive branch.

What are the key pre-requisites for a robust legislature? Besides having political parties with a cross ethnic and

inclusive vision, setting electability standards for nominations is deemed crucial. Countries with a limited number of political parties are better off in unifying members around a national agenda on the parliament floor. For instance, BJP and Congress carry out constructive discussions representing their party's formal stance in the Indian parliament, while the Afghan parliament lacks a similar structure to accelerate efficacy and move towards a coherent national outlook.

In Afghanistan, where the constitution clarifies qualities to hold the highest office in the state, the president, it lacks any provision to present the same for a possible legislator. This constitutional flaw provided the opportunity for many unqualified individuals to find their way into the parliament, and turn it into a place for frequent fistfights and routine intimidations.

The failure is largely part of a bad precedent set forth in post-Taliban, Afghanistan. There is a delusional conformity among ordinary Afghans, civil society and registered voters, they believe these individuals are crops of the very same society, failing to come up with efforts to weigh in on a pragmatic approach to change the status quo, and avoid voting based on relations, financial motives as well as political pressure.

In other parts of the world, it is very unusual for a MP to engage in any sort of incriminating activity outside his legal jurisprudence, astoundingly, in Afghanistan a great majority of serving MPs are either busy intimidating sitting ministers for acquiring lucrative foreign contracts or force their immediate family members for top government appointments. On several occasions when the officials have reasoned, they have been threatened with votes of no confidence.

Other countries form an independent advisory board tasked to study and prepare comprehensive eligibility guidelines for judicial, academic as well as legislature's hopefuls. Perhaps, the independent administrative reform and civil service commission or the country's election commission could acquire the autonomy to lead the efforts in this matter.

This body can be consisted of well-known law professionals, academia, or expert from other walks of life, they will then set the criteria for candidacy, accepted code of conducts as well as all other disciplinary benchmarks including but not limited to long-term absenteeism and prejudicial approaches.

Last but not least, Afghanistan can opt for a similar approach as their Iranian counterparts, in Iran, it is the Guardian Council that has the jurisdiction to act as a facilitator, filtering candidates for top state tenures.

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