

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



April 30, 2015

National Unity Should Render Our Prime Concern

The great saying, "united we stand divided we fall" is the leading principle, we should subscribe to ensures our life long triumph. Afghanistan is our beloved motherland - exercising the bond of intimacy to magnetize all fragments of Afghan society into single whole. In order to reinforce this vision earlier, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani in a meeting with tribal elders and religious leaders reiterated greater national unity. The president said the future could be protected only if the nation demonstrates unity. The religious leader should focus to forge unity of the nation during their sermons. We should not unlearn any activity undermining national unity by strengthening the bond of disparity and differences are our birth born unforgiveable rivals.

Following successful formation and finalization of National Unity Government (NUG), the masses begin to eye resolution of multifaceted problems, waiting their fates for years. Previously, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani revealed the new government had a comprehensive agenda for reforms and change in Afghanistan to peace process, rule of law, good governance, and economic development. While presiding the first session of cabinet meeting Mr. President gave a deadline of 100 days to the ministers to show efficiencies and bring visible change during the laid course of time. Many problems lingered due to delayed cabinet formation given an all-encompassing government usually come across similar problem. The government successfully went past this stage, entering into next stage of getting across these problems. Some of the pleading problems are highlighted below.

Afghanistan faces daunting challenges -poverty one of the challenge pressing it hard. 36% of almost 30 million population lives below poverty line including endemic poverty and lack of human capacity; insecurity; weak governance and institutionalized corruption; opium exports equal to 22% of gross domestic product; rampant gender inequality; and policy, regulatory, and institutional constraints that have limited effective growth in public and private sectors. The government that assumed the office must work out tangible plans - downsizing the problems.

Despite countless challenges left to the new government to face, financial management will be the biggest problem pleading immediate attention. To provide a sustainable backup to its financial needs, the government relies on loans accompanied with handsome amount of interest. High ranked public officials senior politicians involved in bank scandals and corruption, seemed not the government's concern or priority. Consequently, multiple unresolved problems were left to the new government. According to finance commission head, the total loans amounted 2 billion Afghanis which were received from World Bank (WB) nine times, Asian Development Bank (ADB) 14 times, once from IMF, Islamic Development Bank (IDB) four times and Saudi Arabia Monetary Agency two times. A handsome amount our revenue is earmarked for interest of these loans.

It should be learned that Afghanistan cannot develop without a sustainable economical road map drawn and implemented that grants them financial independence. The state of self reliance can only be achieved when heavy investments are made in the field of human resource developmental programs.

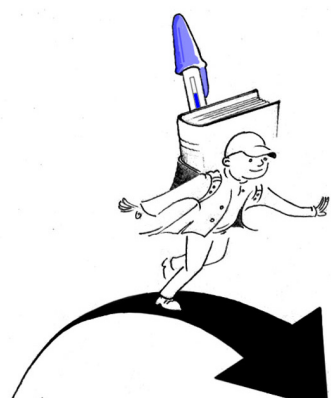
In addition to financial independence, Afghanistan is in dire need of socio-political assistance and trained official in all fields of human endeavors. Any country extending selfless services must be warmly received. In that pursuit a cordial relationship must be developed and tried to preserve the previous ones. Afghanistan was pushed to directionless avenues of battered relation with international community; certainly serve not Afghanistan's interest.

The deteriorating state of security remains to be another obstacle on the way to unbeaten Afghanistan. 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. Harmony promoting education and equitable distribution of resources and services narrows down the differences whilst paving the way for peaceful coexistence. There is a documented existence of law and with negligible application or prejudicial application, serve none's interest.

Another issue earning bad fame for Afghans is the illicit growth and trade of life snatching drug. Many countries and humanitarian organization showed grave concerns over mass production of the drug. Moreover, the illegal drug trade has always served a part in deterioration of law and order and a prior asset of insurgents and militant. Reportedly, the illegal drug has been greater source, serving financial affairs of militancy and insurgency. The government of Afghanistan instead of relying on international community must work out genuine means tackling maintenance of law and devise legitimate and standard procedure of prosecution. The US official stressed the strategy must address alternative development, eradication, interdiction, prosecution, incarceration and then the so-called soft-side programs of awareness, treatment and rehabilitation.

Afghanistan is the land of treasure that is buried deep down in its heart. The unexplored rich earthly resources capable of earning socio-economic possessions for the state, are not taken the advantage of, underlines the negligence if not the incompetence of ruling elites. Afghanistan's youth and resources are potential valuable assets that can earn financial support to its declining but dependent economy.

Putting cognitive abilities into practice the public officials can reduce the size of problems if can not eradicate them. The politicians representing their electoral constitution not necessarily should come up to the expectation of their Electoral College but to the voice of faithfulness and sanity. The government and public officials must realize, the dream of a vibrant, progressive, developed Afghanistan can only materialize, provided a handsome amount of budget is allocated for education, health, infrastructure and governance. We must learn it that a healthy, literate and well-governed Afghanistan is a secure and developed Afghanistan.



Afghanistan-India Relations

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

During President Ghani's visit to India, Afghan and Indian leaders agreed to establish a joint Afghan-Indian chamber of commerce to boost trade between the two countries. The day before, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a joint press conference in New Delhi, expressing their resolve to expand relations between the two countries. During the press conference, Indian Prime Minister assured his country's support to an Afghan-led peace process that would ensure the Afghan constitution is upheld and Afghanistan's last fourteen years' achievements preserved. The two leaders emphasized on mutual interests between Afghanistan and India and the fight against terrorism.

President Ghani's visit to India is highlighted by his new approach towards Afghanistan's peace efforts and improving relations with Islamabad aimed at bringing the Taliban leaders to negotiation table. President Ghani's visit to India is coming at a time when Afghanistan is trying to kick-start the stalled peace negotiations with the Taliban with the help of Pakistan. India has made it clear it is supporting the new Afghan government's renewed initiative for resuming peace talks with the Taliban. However, India maintains that any peace talks with the Taliban should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. Indian reassurance of its support for Afghan-led peace efforts is coming in response to President Ghani's attempts to convince India over its initiative for resuming the stalled peace talks.

However, the nerve in India was uneasy over the new approach in Kabul and a visible rebalancing of the Afghan government foreign policy towards Pakistan. Since the new National Unity Government came to power in Kabul, Afghanistan has drastically changed its attitudes towards Pakistan. Pakistan is believed to have the ultimate influence over the Afghan Taliban. Since then, the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have considerably improved and Afghanistan has secured Islamabad's backing and cooperation in persuading the Taliban to come to the peace negotiation table.

The new Afghan unity government is trying to convince India for understanding its need for Pakistan's backing in pursuing peace talks with the Taliban. During his visit to India, the President also referred to this. India has shown in the past that it understands the Kabul's efforts for improving ties with Pakistan, tacitly endorsing Pakistan's constructive role in the Afghanistan peace efforts. In response to former President Karzai's demands for security assistance, Indian officials responded with prudence and caution, and avoided a hasty move that could irritate Pakistan. Seemingly, the long-awaited visit to India has been helpful in ensuring India's long-term partnership with Afghanistan and its backing for the Afghan-led peace efforts.

During past years, Afghanistan and India developed close relations as two countries held a common ground over fighting terrorism and strengthening regional and international cooperation for backing Afghanistan. Afghanistan sees India as one of the key regional powers that can help Afghanistan's economic development as well as stabilizing the country. Indian has been one of the major supporters of Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime. With providing over \$2 billion

in aid to Afghanistan, India has been the fifth major donor country to Afghanistan after the US, UK, Japan and Germany. During past fourteen years, New Delhi has had active presence in Afghanistan's economic, educational, security and social areas. It has had numerous reconstruction and development projects in Afghanistan's infrastructure, health, education, security, agriculture, governance sectors.

Afghanistan has always been important for India, and the New Delhi one of the key regional supporters of Afghanistan's past central governments except the Taliban regime. India sees a strong, independent, stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan as being crucial to her security interests and for the overall stability of the region in the evolving geopolitical and geostrategic scenarios. Building up and sustaining the capability of the government of Afghanistan through external assistance to enable it to provide its own security is a major objective for India. For India, Afghanistan is undoubtedly a very important partner in the region to project its power status and to secure its entry into energy rich and untapped markets of central Asia. India has been backing Afghanistan's reconstruction not only in light of security competition between India and Pakistan but also on Indian pursuit of a desire to show that India has earned the capability to be seen as an extra-regional power moving toward great power status.

In October 2011, Afghanistan and India signed a strategic partnership agreement aimed at securing long-term robust cooperation between Afghanistan and India in many areas. The strategic partnership agreement with India has been aimed at guaranteeing the continuation of the Indian role in reconstruction of Afghanistan and the country's future commitment at a time when the US and other NATO members are withdrawing from Afghanistan. Despite a visible rebalancing of foreign policy, Afghanistan still sees India, enough strong to play a robust and constructive role in rebuilding the shattered economy of Afghanistan.

Apart from Indian help in Afghanistan's reconstruction, the government of Afghanistan also views India an important partner for helping securing Afghanistan following complete withdrawal of the US and NATO from the country. Development cooperation along with training, equipping the Afghan security forces by India doesn't only harm the regional interests of Afghanistan's neighboring countries but also it can help stabilize the region. Reconstruction and Stabilization of Afghanistan through international aid including India's assistances pave the way for India to seize economic and trade opportunities in Afghanistan and the central Asian states.

Afghanistan should develop bilateral relations with India in the context of regional cooperation focused on trade and economic relations between India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, the Central Asian States as well as Russia and Europe. Afghanistan's regional approach will serve interests of both India and Pakistan, while the two South Asian countries can engage in constructive cooperation in Afghanistan that would boost their own relations as well. It is never early for Afghanistan to seek a cohesive regional cooperation through expanding relations with the regional countries including India and Pakistan.

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Lessons for Stabilizing Afghanistan Now

By Jehanzeb Wazir

Afghan paid a high price to history and the future holds a great promise for them. The geographic and geostrategic experience provided a national apprehension, and downfall of the Taliban regime further provided an unprecedented opportunity to its leaders to install a democratic and stable government. The Afghan nation must have learnt a lesson of stabilizing Afghanistan from the decades 'Great Powers warfare' on their land. Now it is a dire need of time to activate every individual spirit of political proficiency to rebuild this shattered state which has been exploited by using various ideologies for their political purposes by many regional and great powers.

After 2014 elections there is improvement in the structural reforms and national and foreign policies but still this nascent democratic government has multiple challenges to head-on in the future. For stabilization, more comprehensive approaches are required with regional players to form a strong democratic state based on organized national army, nation-wide political parties and stable economy.

The economy of Afghanistan is not strong enough to sustain and support its own security forces without foreign aids now. Despite the donors at the Tokyo conference pledged an additional \$16 billion in civilian aid through 2015; the Government of Afghanistan will need to overcome a number of challenges, including low revenue collection, job creation, high levels of corruption, weak government capacity. It could no longer depend on aids and financial support unless take advantage of its own resources and provide a room of opportunity to international investment and enhance its economic ties in the region.

The sustainability of a peaceful state is concerned with the economic and security policies. How the New Afghan Government design foreign policies towards the changing polarity of the world? The traditional peace approaches of polycentric foreign policy towards its neighbors and a peaceful settlement with Taliban is required to sustain political apparatus in the long run. Only polycentric approaches would add up more to peace in the region and policies of the strategic interests could be better transformed into economic interests by understanding with regional players. The regional great powers like Russia and China are wisely remarking regional security landscape in Asia to contain the US geopolitical strategies. The China Strategic-economic policy in South Asia and Central Asia provides a chance of more stable and peaceful Afghanistan. The government could better utilize these options to enhance its security and develop economic ties with regional countries to keep away the rival states of playing politics of proxy in Afghanistan.

Another challenge for the government is elements of internal instability which includes the warlord's influence and the religious fundamentalism present in the roots of society. They reject the political and democratic process in the country. The new government steps indicate that significant progress has been made towards democratization. As more Afghans now understand democracy in terms of fundamental political rights, feel politically proficient, and believe that democracy is compatible with cultural-tribal system. So far these positive gains provide hope to transport public confidence in democracy however government institutions do not provide effective responses to people's needs for security and economic and social development. Therefore, state functionality needs strong democratic nation-wide political parties to play a vital

role in the next election.

Bolstering government legitimacy in Afghanistan requires processes that could address corruption, elite control over government, political exclusion of women and minorities, and the need for significant structural reforms. In doing so, the role of media cannot be ignored which is an important tool to mobilize the mass for government legitimization in the country. It must focus its energies to utilize media for a social and political purpose which could shape conciliatory psyche of the coming generation. The active participation of youth was very positive during the 2014 presidential election campaigns but still needs to enhance their energies for political awareness especially democracy and building of national character. For instance, Afghanistan has one of the highest proportions of youth in the world which has the potential to absorb itself into strong political framework. This younger generation would transform a war-torn country into more secure and prosperous place to live. Now it is the responsibility of the government to keep aware the coming educated generation of the past political experiences so that they could unhurriedly replace the old power of warlords and religious conservatives. But this power transformation needs time and political mobilization to fully engage youth by providing opportunities of participation in the state affairs. This could build better generation engaged with the 21st Century world politics so that the next decade power in Afghanistan will shift from aging generation of warlordism and conservative fundamentalism to more tolerant younger Afghan. The best option for the government is to induct youth into the state machinery to regulate and implement comprehensive measures in the future.

As rejectionists of Democracy spans various theological and political strains. The religious members are reluctant about democracy in general and elections in particular. The denunciation against democracy and modern electoral politics is a well-known characteristic of the ideology of the religious groups in the country. They have become increasingly visible, with activists systematically preaching against election and women participation in the state affairs. The women rights are an addressable challenge for the coming generation to provide equal space in the political and social affairs of the country. The tragedies like Farkhunda by a mob raise serious questions for the new government. It is important to avoid such tragedies in the future and needs to provide equal rights to women that are widely accepted across all segments of society. The development of institutional arrangements to promote the increased participation of women in social and political affairs has moved far ahead of social attitudes that still restrict the choices and involvement of women in many spheres of life. Much progress is still needed to move beyond headcounts and achieve meaningful participation of women in Afghanistan's economic, social and political processes.

Now this is a high time for a nation to learn a lesson of stabilization and put national energies in the welfare and building of the country. The challenges of insurgency and economy have to be resolved through better channelization of state policies. Every citizen is responsible to guard and contribute for the betterment of this nation. There is need of structural reforms internally and devising rational approaches towards the regional politics to avoid further chaos and devastation.

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