

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



August 23, 2017

## On New US Afghan Strategy

With the announcement of America's new Afghan strategy, there are hopes that the situation of peace and tranquility may get better; however, there are also serious concerns that an aggressive attitude in this regard may further prolong the ongoing war in Afghanistan that now extends to 16 years. Trumps during his campaign had clearly said that he would make efforts to drawdown troops from Afghanistan and may end the war; however, the strategy announced seems totally different from what he had previously said. Anyhow, the important point is to see whether the new strategy would be beneficial for the Afghan people as a whole or not.

16 years of war against terrorism has proved to be very costly both for US and Afghanistan. US has spent billions of dollars and lost around 2,400 soldiers, while more than 20,000 soldiers have been injured. On the other hand, Afghan people have given many sacrifices as well; thousands of people have been victimized by the prevailing insecurity—particularly, they have been targeted by Taliban and Daesh insurgents. Given that there have been such sacrifices, peace and tranquility are non-existent in many parts of the country and the economic and social circumstances are instable as well.

To tackle the mentioned scenario, US president, Donald Trump, announced that US would send more soldiers to Afghanistan to fight the terrorists and that US would not tolerate the insurgents and their safe havens both in Afghanistan and the neighboring Pakistan. He said in his statement, "We will also expand authority for American armed forces to target the terrorists and criminal networks that sow violence and chaos throughout Afghanistan." In short, it seemed from Trumps statements that US would follow a tough military solution to terrorism in Afghanistan.

In fact, there are three very clear messages in US's Afghan strategy. First, US will pursue military objectives in Afghanistan with a new vigor, though, not as much as it used to be. Second, US has given a message to Pakistan to seriously fight with the terrorists that reside on their side of the border. And third, US does not seem to have a strict number of forces or schedule for the presence of US troops in Afghanistan, which gives them the freedom of changing matters as per the requirements of time. However, it is important to see how these messages will be received; particularly, by the regional countries, and what the ultimate outcome of the changing scenario will be on the poor and suffering people of Afghanistan. For the time being, it is difficult to say anything since there is some time before the strategy is implemented.

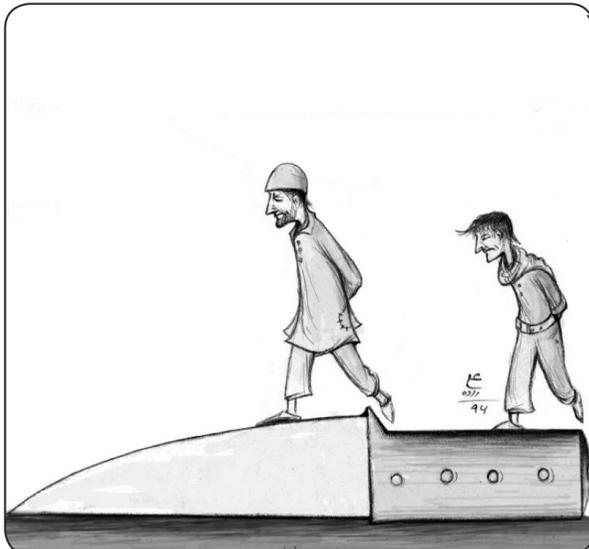
Afghan leaders have welcomed the new strategy and they seem confident that US will keep on supporting Afghanistan through difficult times. President Ashraf Ghani said in a statement, "I am grateful to President Trump and the American people for this affirmation of support for our efforts to achieve self-reliance and for our joint struggle to rid the region from the threat of terrorism... The new strategy will increase the capacity in the Resolute Support mission. It will particularly emphasize on enhancing the Afghan air power, doubling the size of the Afghan Special Force and deepening NATO's ability to train, advice and assist Afghan security forces."

Meanwhile, CEO Abdullah Abdullah said in his statement, "The strategy renewed the commitment of the United States to Afghanistan and to our people. This new chapter opened by the new strategy is a unique opportunity to tackle terrorists and achieve our goals for peace... Our message to our neighbors is that the new US policy is a chance for them (countries in the region) to utilize and benefit from this opportunity." Definitely, it is an opportunity for the region but for Afghanistan it is the last opportunity. Afghan people, particularly, Afghan leaders must ponder upon how they used the opportunities that were provided to them previously.

They need to mend their ways and their thinking. They can only benefit from the US support if they are very serious about the war against terrorism. Previous experiences have shown that Afghan leaders have not been sincere in fighting against terrorism, rather, they have been busy in their own tussles and disagreements.

The current political scenario and deteriorating security situation in different parts of the country can easily depict what our leaders have been doing for the last few years.

Now, it is the time for them to forget their differences, join hands together, and stand united against Taliban and Daesh and against terrorism as a whole, so that a better future can be guaranteed for the people of Afghanistan. Ultimately, it is the people of Afghanistan who must be benefited from any change in circumstance. Unless, the poor and suffering people achieve something positive from any strategy, it is bound to end up in smoke.



## Judicial System Needs Reforms

By Abdul Hamid Arifi

Access to justice is one of the citizens' fundamental rights and its provision is in need of sound, effective and independent society. Lack of citizens' access to justice or strict restriction in this regard is one of the insurmountable challenges in the country. Likewise, the long and complicated system of bureaucracy and large-scale corruption in institutions resulted in citizens' mistrust to the executive body.

According to citizens' belief, justice and judicial system in Afghanistan is not satisfactory and will not ensure justice in terms of individuals' rights in the society. On the other hand, reforming institutions, mainly justice and judicial system, is and will be government's commitment. Therefore, the state has strong determination for reforming legal and judicial system seeking to utilize the existing resources and capacities appropriately and take practical step in this respect. The international community's legal organization in Afghanistan also agrees with this issue and reiterates that for reviving justice and judicial system, Afghan government will have to focus seriously on rule of law, ensure justice and prioritize protecting citizens' rights as an organized strategy. Considering national programs for reforming justice and judiciary, Afghan government, along with the aid of its international allies, seeks to begin reformation. It further decides to ensure law and justice in the best possible way and implement law fairly via building capacity and employing expert manpower.

Afghans' high expectation is that the government, along with the support of international community, will fulfill its commitment vis-à-vis the rule of law through reforming justice and judicial system. Lately, the state and the international community made effort to resolve the challenges in institutions via conducting short-term educational programs for judges and district attorneys. However, it did not have a palpable result.

Lack of information regarding the necessities of legal services in districts and provinces for an accurate evaluation about challenges in institutions is one of the major issues. Nonetheless, it is believed that realizing the deficiencies and defects in all fields, mainly in justice and judicial system, will be the most significant step in implementing an effective plan for reformation. Thus, the relevant institutions do not merely complete the National Action Plan on Judicial Reform, but seek to adapt their plans according to the existing problems and needs of different regions (provinces and districts).

As it is necessary to strengthen and reform the security forces, we believe that establishing rule of law and the provision of justice

for creating stability in the society is also urgent and is no less important than that. Therefore, Afghan government has ratified and approved national plans for reforming justice with the intention of fulfilling its national and international commitments about rule of law and ensuring justice in the society, eliminating administrative corruption in judicial system, conducting fair and standard trials in courts, preventing arbitrary and unlawful clashes and detentions, etc. The action and practical plans were prepared by the institution. Hopefully, the implementation of these programs and plans will be ushered in as soon as possible. Government has approved the national programs for reforming justice and judiciary with the aim of achieving objectives such as supplying effective legal and judicial services to citizens, facilitating their access to justice, ensuring the rule of law and fighting administrative corruption, ensuring meritocracy, boosting the professional capacity of legal and judicial staff and facilitating them access to modern and electronic equipment, strengthening the capacity and mechanism for reforming law and structure of justice sector, and spreading awareness for citizens about their rights and responsibilities. Enforcing national plan about reforming justice and judiciary, which aims citizens' easy access to justice and quality service, is the main responsibility of relevant institutions. Paving the ground for easy access to justice for all citizens, mainly the vulnerable part of society such as women and children will be possible through implementing law.

Therefore, structural reform in judicial institutions, reforming law, boosting the capacity of staff of the relevant institutions and creating transparency in law enforcement, as well as coordination among judicial institutions is one of the basic priorities emphasized in the program. It is worth saying that National Justice and Judicial Reform Program was originally set up and managed by the Legal Department of Second Vice President's office under the leadership of Serwar Danish.

The draft of this program has been discussed several times for further promotion in the Justice and Judicial Committee of Danish's office and ultimately finalized. After being approved by cabinet, it was confirmed by the Supreme Council for the Rule of Law and Fight against Corruption. Hence, the relevant organizations are supposed to prepare their action plan in the frame of the program and send them to the office of Second Vice President for the endorsement of Supreme Council of the Rule of Law. Hopefully, it will be finalized and implemented in near future.

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## Why Bannon Had to Go

By Elizabeth Drew

In many, if not most, US administrations, some figure emerges who convinces the press that the president couldn't function without him (it's yet to be a her). The indispensable aide is, indeed, one of the most well-worn tropes of the modern presidency. Karl Rove was "Bush's Brain"; Harry Hopkins held Franklin Delano Roosevelt's prolific White House team together; Bill Moyers appeared on a magazine cover as "Johnson's Good Angel." Without such a figure, the story inevitably goes, the administration would be a mess, if not a disaster.

As often as not, the trope is invented or encouraged by the particular indispensable figure. Journalists usually fall for the story, regardless of how well-founded it is: it clarifies everything, and it gives them something to write about. The indispensable aide is only too happy to reveal some dramatic story about how he saved the day, devised some particularly ingenious idea, or prevented some terrible mistake.

But, as often as not, the soi-disant crucial figure oversteps. In the Reagan White House, Don Regan, who succeeded James Baker as Chief of Staff, fancied himself the prime minister: he inserted himself into photos of Reagan with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, was rude to lesser beings (including reporters), and made the fatal mistake of hanging up on Nancy Reagan, who was dedicated to looking after her Ronny. Regan was soon out. Presidents themselves aren't particularly fond of reading how some super-smart aide saved their bacon. All presidents have healthy egos - if others are so smart, why aren't they president? The wise president-elect identifies a peacock and avoids the species from the start, or knows how to keep its feathers in check. Barack Obama was plenty pleased with himself, with reason, but such was his dignity that no super-aide emerged during his presidency. It didn't occur to his advisers to try to outshine him.

Stephen Bannon wasn't particularly wise as a White House aide - he couldn't contain his inner peacock - and Donald Trump's ego is particularly fragile. Both are or were misfits in their roles. Trump had spent his business life surrounded by family and flunkies: no stockholders or vice chairmen with their own ambitions. The two men were a mismatch made in White House hell. As a candidate, Trump went with his instincts, and his instinct in the 2016 presidential race was that blue-collar workers and others who feared for their economic future needed their own victims, be they Mexican immigrants or billionaire bankers. A wall - phantasmagorical or not - would keep out the "bad people" Mexico was "sending us." As it happened, of all the people around Trump, Bannon most matched these views. A person like Bannon - who presents as a learned figure and confirms one's own brilliance - is a person one wants to have close by. Trump is essentially a "whatever works" kind of guy. Once elected, he brought in billionaires to populate his cabinet, and so far seems to have gotten away with telling his supporters that really rich people are needed to run the country.

Bannon, on the other hand, wrapped himself in what might be loosely termed a philosophy, which consisted of a nihilistic anger toward any "establishment." But his was faux populism: while politically Bannon championed blue-collar workers, he lived on the millions he had attained from a stint at Goldman Sachs and

through a fortunate investment in the TV comedy "Seinfeld."

He also flourished with backing from the billionaire Mercer family. The Mercers, who made their fortune through the high-tech genius of patriarch Robert Mercer and a hedge fund he led, fund Breitbart News, a far-right website formerly edited by Bannon that promotes ultra-nationalism and white supremacy, with a whiff of anti-Semitism.

Bannon's ostensibly radical views were dressed up in a fancy set of principles embroidered with name drops of far-out thinkers. In trade and immigration, for example, Bannon's acquired philosophy aligned with Trump's political opportunism (Trump's more liberal, often Democrat-backing former self is another story).

It was a mistake to see Bannon as Pygmalion to Trump's Galatea, or, as some did, as the Trump White House's Rasputin. Bannon reinforced the nationalist inclination that led Trump to overrule his daughter Ivanka and his economic advisers by withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement. And Bannon intruded on foreign policy by getting himself put on the National Security Council for a while, until two of the generals in Trump's administration - namely, National Security Adviser H. R. McMaster and John Kelly (now the chief of staff) - got him removed. (Bannon was believed to be behind the recent push to force out McMaster, mainly by suggesting he's "anti-Israel.") But Bannon's role as genius-without-portfolio - in which Trump indulged him, until Kelly arrived and clarified chains of command - was his undoing. Without any defined responsibilities, he intruded where he wished - and ended up with a lot of enemies. He had plenty of time to fight internal battles by feeding reporters stories about his White House rivals, though he would switch someone (for example, former Chief of Staff Reince Priebus) from rival to friend, as convenient.

Bannon was a troublemaker as much as a policymaker - and the two roles didn't mesh. Trump also began to see Bannon as a "leaker." And Trump's White House is all too leaky: many who work there let reporters know that they have, at best, mixed feelings about working for Trump, but believe it the better part of valor to stay and protect the country from his leadership. Bannon's braggadocio took him to the most dangerous terrain on which to confront Trump: the president's obsession with his election victory. The ambiguity of winning the Electoral College vote (not, as he has falsely claimed, by the greatest margin since Reagan) but losing the popular vote by nearly three million votes, dogs Trump. That's why he invented millions of "illegal" voters and had maps printed showing the states he won in red - covering most of the territory of the United States - even suggesting to at least one reporter that his newspaper run the map on the paper's front page.

Suggestions by Bannon that he played a major role in Trump's election victory were poisonous to the relationship between the two men. And so this White House misfit finally had to go.

Now that Bannon is gone, however, he will hurl missives from his new-old perch at Breitbart, to which he returned the same day as his announced departure. And Trump will still be Trump. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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