

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



December 17, 2018

Education Sector Requires Attention

It is now a widely accepted fact that Afghanistan cannot survive without pursuit of modern education. A brighter and better future can only be guaranteed if Afghan children both male and female have easy access to educational institutions. Particularly, primary and secondary education is vital for the efforts to make education lead our way towards educated society. However, even after knowing the fact, the government has not been able to play any considerable role in this regard. Though, there have been efforts since the downfall of Taliban, serious issues still prevail in the sector and hinder the way for better education opportunities for Afghan children. One of the most dominating hindrances in this regard is the prevailing corruption in the sector. Previous government, though exaggerated much its performance regarding developments in education of children, was not able to achieve something worthwhile.

Even their claim that there were 11 million Afghan children in school proved to be wrong as the original figure turned out to be only 6 million.

Even National Unity Government (NUG) has not been able to achieve something worthwhile as far as the education sector is concerned. It has focused most of its energy on ensuring security but even that has not been achieved and, therefore, different sectors including education sector, have been suffering. Different schools in different parts of the country, particularly in the restive districts have turned into wilderness because of insecurity. Parents are not ready to send their children to schools because they fear that their schools may be bombed, or their children killed on the way to school.

On the other hand, there has not been any comprehensive policy in place regarding the promotion of primary schools in the country. The only initiative that was taken by President Ghani was the establishment of residential apartments for the teachers, which faced different controversies and hindrances after announcement. Even today, it is not sure what is the status of the project and whether all the deserving teachers have been allocated apartments or not. Nevertheless, the reports also suggest that the people in power have been able to provide the apartments to their recommended people, while the actual deserving ones have been neglected altogether. Even there are cases where the people who have never been a part of teaching career have been allocated apartments.

This is really tragic and shows the level of irresponsibility and corruption that has penetrated within our society. If the country is not able to make developments and achievements even after so much assistance and support from international organizations and international community, it is because the authorities in Afghanistan have been corrupt and have had no serious commitment and preference for education. Corruption and misstatement in education sector shows the worst form of ethical degradation and must not go unchecked. Moreover, there must be a proper education policy in place that must be able to address all the issues being faced by the education sector in the country.

Afghanistan is one of the countries that are highly influenced by such people who aim to block all the ways to improvement and modernization. Blinded by religious extremism and outdated tribal values, they are always ready to oppose any sort of efforts that are devoted to spread education to the people of Afghanistan, as they know that the modern education that has been spread in the country to a certain level may encourage evolution and modern changes.

In particular, they are against the modern education for the females. The destiny-makers of this society know that if the girls are given modern education, they may question about their roles in rights. They may question the prejudiced rules and regulations. They may challenge the religious dogmas and in due course challenge the Mullahs and the illiterate tribal leaders. They may change the scenario and that is what the makers of the society do not want them to do. They want them to be passive and compliant, as in such state they would be easier to tackle and ruled over. It is important that the responsible institutions and authorities realize the worth and importance of modern education and must encourage it as much as possible.

Modern education is essential for Afghan society if it has to invite positive changes. Education, as a matter of fact, makes positive evolution of the society possible and embraces the new ideas and processes with open arms. The nations of the world that have given value to modern education, made it universal and have made efforts to develop their education systems on the basis of modern and scientific systems have been able to earn astonishing growth and reputation. Simultaneously, they have assimilated innumerable amenities of life for their people and have made them capable of living their lives with poise and decency.



The Role of Regional Players in Afghan Peace Process

By: Moh. Salem Naji

Translated By: Moh. Zahir Akbari

As from several decades ago, Afghanistan has been involved in violence and civil war which sometimes has been increasing but sometimes decreasing. May of post-colonial African countries and Latin America have experienced civil war, but there are some features in violence and conflict of Afghanistan that distinguish it from many other types of violence exist in the rest of the world. This violence and conflict in Afghanistan have been affected by several basic factors such as regional geopolitics, the Cold War, and later the new world order, Islamism - religious radicalism and Afghan ethnic-nationalism. This paper addresses the regional geopolitical role of Afghanistan in conflict and violence, and later in the peace process in the country:

Geopolitically, Afghanistan plays a central role in linking the South Asian geopolitics, Middle East countries and Central Asia. At the culmination of the Cold War, the Soviet Union considered the establishment of a communist system in Afghanistan as an appropriate option, in order to infiltrate South Asia and reach the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, during the Cold War, Americans felt that if the Soviet Union secured its base in Afghanistan then the influence of the capitalist world in South Asia and the Middle East energy would be compromised. For this reason, the Americans tried to support Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan in cooperation with regional actors such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Afghanistan is among the mountainous countries in the world, which has proven its importance in the guerrilla war with the communist government of Afghanistan (the Soviet Union).

With the help of Pakistan's geopolitical position, the United States was able to send its military and financial assistance to Mujahideen and therefore the long border of Afghanistan with Pakistan was a serious problem to the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Given the geopolitical position of Afghanistan, Beijing was also in the ranks of Mujahideen supporters and helped them through Pakistan. The geographic location of Afghanistan made it impossible for the Soviet Union to win a quick war, and on the other hand, the Soviet economic crisis did not allow them to continue war in Afghanistan.

After the collapse of the communist government of Afghanistan in the 1990s, the most important regional players that played in Afghanistan were Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran. The formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan was defeated in the 1990s while the main reasons was lack of adequate knowledge of the Mojahedin in governance and the lack of authority on the part of regional actors. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia supported jihadist groups in the south and east of the country but Iran supported jihadist groups in central and northern Afghanistan. Given its geopolitical position, Pakistan was the most important foreign actor in the 1990s, in Afghanistan.

After fall of Mujahideen, the Taliban terrorist group came to power but it was with comprehensive cooperation of Pakistan. Given the

Pakistan's border challenges with India, they supported the radical Islamist groups in Afghanistan because they consider these groups as a preventive tool for the expansion of India's influence in Afghanistan, and on the other hand, Islamabad could use it in the Kashmir war. After the September 11 terrorist attack, the regional players regained their importance in Afghanistan's political affairs. The US pressure on Pakistan has made it apparently relinquish support from Taliban and other terrorists and through this it received millions of dollars.

At the Bonn Conference and its subsequent political events, most of regional actors were involved in Afghanistan. The Russia and Central Asia intelligence cooperation and even Iran with the United States in Afghanistan was due to a geopolitical position that compelled these countries to cooperate in removal of the Taliban and al-Qaeda from Afghanistan. The Bonn Conference had some shortcomings that could not root out the battles from Afghanistan. Of course, the United States has also made some mistakes in state-building and also fighting against terrorism in the country. The US's delay in the attack on Afghanistan, and later sending insufficient forces, gave the opportunity to terrorists flee to Pakistan and then return to battlefields at a proper time.

After 2014, the terrorists have unprecedentedly strengthened themselves, especially in the south parts of Afghanistan. The most important factor behind Pakistan's support for the Taliban could be widespread influence of India, the regional rival of Pakistan in Afghanistan, as India considered being a major contributor to state-building and development in Afghanistan.

In the early day, Iran thought removal of the Taliban from Afghanistan could be in the interest of that country, but the subsequent policies of the United States during the Bush period towards Iran led to revision of Iran's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. After the September 11 incident, Russia cooperated with the United States in the field of intelligence services and logistics, but the color revolutions in the central Asia led the revision of its policies towards Afghanistan, too. On the other hand, the Arab Spring and the emergence of new terrorist groups, especially ISIL, in the Middle East and later in Afghanistan have made Russia and Iran become more flexible against the Taliban.

Although the Taliban are considered hostile to Iran and Russia ideologically, the ISIL terrorist group was the common enemy of all of these, and that's why brought them together. Since ISIL's goal was to establish an Islamic caliphate in all Islamic lands, such as the Middle East, Khorasan and so on, while Russia was sensitive to this area. Now, this might be a turning point for government to hold active diplomacies so as to convince the regional and international actors that empowerment of the Taliban and other terrorists are in interest of no countries. On the hand, a powerful government in Afghanistan is in the interests of all regions and the world while a weak government could be a proper bed for growth of international terrorists that will be a real threat to the world.

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammadzahirakbari@gmail.com

Europe in Disarray

By: Richard N. Haass

It was not all that long ago - just a few years, as hard as that it is to believe - that Europe appeared to be the part of the world most closely resembling the end-of-history idyl depicted by Francis Fukuyama at the end of the Cold War. Democracy, prosperity, and peace all seemed firmly entrenched.

Not anymore. Parts of Paris are literally burning. The United Kingdom is consumed and divided by Brexit. Italy is led by an unwieldy left-right coalition that is resisting EU budget rules. Germany is contending with a political realignment and in the early phases of a transition to a new leader. Hungary and Poland have embraced the illiberalism seen across much of the world. Spain is confronting Catalan nationalism. And Russia is committing new acts of aggression against Ukraine.

In what by historical standards constitutes an instant, the future of democracy, prosperity, and peace in Europe has become uncertain. Much of what had been widely assumed to be settled is not. NATO's rapid demobilization after the Cold War looks premature and precipitous.

There is no single explanation for these developments. What we are seeing in France is populism of the left, the result of people having difficulty making ends meet and rejecting new taxes, whatever the justification for them. This is different from what has fueled the rise of the far right across Europe: cultural defensiveness amid local and global challenges, above all immigration.

The European Union, for its part, has gradually lost its hold on the public imagination. It has been too remote, too bureaucratic, and too elite-driven for too long. Meanwhile, renewed Russian aggression may simply reflect President Vladimir Putin's judgment that, having realized large political returns on his previous military "investments" in Ukraine and Syria, he had little to fear or lose from further actions.

Europe's political class deserves its share of responsibility for today's growing disarray. The EU introduced a common currency without a fiscal or banking union, making it all but impossible to conduct a coherent economic policy. The decision to put the UK's continued EU membership to a popular vote, while allowing a simple majority to decide the issue and failing to spell out the terms of departure, was misguided.

Likewise, opening Germany's borders to a flood of refugees, however pure Chancellor Angela Merkel's motives, was sure to trigger a backlash. Most recently, French President Emmanuel Macron did himself no favors by backing down to the "Yellow Vest" protesters and offering compromises more likely to fuel additional demonstrations and exacerbate his country's budget predicament.

We should not assume things will get better. It is only a matter of time before France's far-right National Rally (formerly the National Front) and political parties across Europe figure out how to combine economic and cultural populism and threaten the post-World War II political order.

Italy's hybrid populist government is a version of just that.

The UK will remain torn over its relationship (or lack thereof) with the EU no matter what comes of Brexit; and it is entirely possible that a post-Brexit UK might come under serious strain itself, given renewed calls for Irish unity and Scottish independence. There is no formula for dividing power between Brussels and capitals that would be acceptable to both the EU and national governments. Meanwhile, it is far from certain that Putin is content or done with his aggression against Ukraine or conceivably others.

Moreover, in a world of increasing inequality, violence within and between countries, and climate change, the pressures posed by immigration are more likely to worsen than fade away. And economic dislocation is bound to intensify in a world of global competition and new technologies that will eliminate millions of existing jobs.

Why this matters should be obvious. Europe still represents a quarter of the world's economy. It is the largest constellation of democratic countries. The last century demonstrated more than once the cost of a breakdown of order on the continent.

Alas, just as there is no single cause that explains Europe's increasing disarray, there is no single solution either. To be precise, there is no solution of any sort. There is, however, a set of policies that, if adopted, would help leaders manage the challenges.

A comprehensive immigration strategy that balances security, human rights, and economic competitiveness is one such policy. A defense effort that focuses more on how money is spent than on how much is needed would go a considerable way in buttressing Europe's security. Moreover, deterrence should be strengthened by bolstering NATO and further arming Ukraine. Weaning Europe from Russian natural gas makes sense as well, which implies halting the Nord Stream II pipeline that is meant to bring gas directly from Russia to Germany, bypassing Ukraine. And additional retraining programs are needed for workers whose jobs will disappear as a result of globalization and automation.

Much of this agenda would benefit from American involvement and support. It would help if the United States stopped viewing the EU as an enemy and NATO allies as free-riders. Europe includes the countries most prepared to work with the US to deter Russian aggression; integrate China into global trade and investment frameworks on terms consistent with Western interests; mitigate and, where necessary, adapt to climate change; and set rules of the road for cyberspace.

Alas, such an approach is unlikely to be forthcoming from Donald Trump any time soon. That leaves Europe with no choice but to confront its disarray mostly on its own.

Richard N. Haass is President of the Council on Foreign Relations. His most recent book is *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*

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

Vice Chairman / Exec. Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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