

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

Daily
Outlook
AFGHANISTAN
The Leading Independent Newspaper

January 07, 2019

The Most Threatening Economic Challenge

As Afghanistan stands in front of economic and political challenges, one of the most important challenges for it would be creating job opportunities for all the deserving people of the country. As economic infrastructure has not been developed, the country would require considerable time and support to reach to a point that may be considered satisfactory, and that may pave the way for the human resource to be utilized in the best possible manner.

Unemployment is not only introducing frustration among the youngsters but also depriving the country from using its human capital particularly young population for the good of the country. On many occasions, the deserving youngsters of the country have staged demonstrations in desperation and hopelessness. Having required education and degrees, many youngsters should have jobs in their relevant profession, but they are compelled to saunter aimlessly.

Nevertheless, the voices of youngsters seem to be falling on deaf ears. The economic system has not been able to create opportunities that should be able to absorb talent from the educated youngsters. Since, the economic growth is very slow, mostly because of lack of new investments in the private sector, most of the youngsters have highly depended on the government jobs or the jobs offered by different national and international NGOs. However, such jobs have also been reducing since many national and international NGOs have stopped functioning, particularly, after the reduction of international troops in the country and decrease in the amount of aids received by the sector. The business opportunities for individuals, particularly, for the ones who have no capital are non-existent. Neither the system favors such opportunities, nor the government has any loan or support packages for them; therefore, they have not been able to take initiatives in this regard.

At the same time, youngsters also demand that the government must stop giving a large amount of US dollars to useless officials, advisors and MPs in monthly salaries and instead generate jobs for the youths.

It is really important to understand the frustration and the demands of the unemployed youth. Unemployment, if left unattended, would ultimately give rise to many other problems in the country. Currently, one of the basic reasons for the growing insecurity and rising rate of drug addiction is unemployment.

The capable youth who find no job opportunities join the ranks of the terrorists readily. The terrorists are ready to pay them and their families handsome amount for different evil tasks. Since, there are many parts of the country that have turned into markets for terrorists and terrorism, unemployed youth could be the most suitable commodity for them.

Moreover, frustration that may result from the lack of employment is another issue that the youngsters have to deal with. Because of family pressure and the psychological problems that arise from idleness, youngsters fail to keep integrity in their personalities and become the victims of social isolation and drug abuse. The rising rate of drug addiction throughout the country is a clear example. Many youngsters, having lost every hope and optimism in their lives, can be found lost in the filth of addicting drugs along the drains and on the garbage at different places. Can such youngster play a positive role for the future of the country?

Moreover, there are many youngsters who have lost all the hopes from the country and have fled to other countries for better future. Though some of them have reached to their intended destination, there are many who have not been successful in doing so. Some of them even lost their lives on the way; while there are many who are still on the way with their fates undecided.

President Ashraf Ghani, on the other hand, have promised many times to create jobs for the citizens. He has also announced that a number of programs will be launched to create employment for the citizens. Nevertheless, tangible measures in this regard seem non-existent. Promises have remained promises alone, while the capable and young human resource is being wasted or used for negative purposes, bring losses and backwardness for the country.

Afghanistan's economic system can only be strengthened when the capable and skilled individuals participate in strengthening the economic system. Especially the youngsters who get qualified from universities must be given opportunities to present and use their education and skills in the profession of their choice and interest. Young blood equipped with determination and patriotism can definitely play a significant role; all they need is equitable treatment from the prevailing system. The government must start taking practical measures before it is too late. Unless the promises are converted into practical steps it is very difficult to expect any change in the ongoing situation.

Moreover, equal job opportunities must be created for girls and women as well as they form an integral part of Afghan populace and can play a tremendous role in improving Afghan economic system.

**US and Legacy of Conflicts**

Writer: Mohammad Hedayat

Translator: Moh Zahir Akbari

The president of the United States, Donald Trump, is a person who always creates great waves of surprise! These surprises seem to be rooted in President Trump's personality rather than his strategic goals and The US national interests. Since he has assumed power, he has taken many paradoxical stances at the regional and global levels. His recent statements about Afghanistan not only were against the mutual agreements between the two countries, but also contradict to international norms and values. Therefore, it was sharply opposed by the US and Afghan government officials.

Trump in his recent remarks, expressed some surprising comments that shocked many observers. He said that the Soviet Union had the right to attack on Afghanistan in order to suppress terrorists and prevent the spread of terrorism into the territory of the Soviet Union. According to him, the United States can no longer be the world's policeman to protect the interests of other countries that are more than 6000 miles away from the United States. From his points of view, when there is a war in Afghanistan or Syria, that others are killing each other, this does nothing to do with the United States. According to the US President, Moodi's decision to establish a library in Afghanistan seems ridiculous. The above points are only some parts of Trump's remarkable statements about fighting against terrorists and issues related to the United States and its allies in the Middle East and South Asia region, especially Afghanistan and Syria.

The Afghan government has responded to these remarks, in particular when Trump termed Afghan Mujahideen as terrorists. But the reaction by Afghan government is more idealistic than in being accordance with the current realities of the region and Afghanistan. The statement which was issued by the Afghan government stressed on the holiness of Afghan war and legitimacy of Afghan defensive uprising against the aggression of the former Soviet Union invasion. Based on this, the US government has been asked to clarify such statements.

But the truth is that the words of President Trump never have any ethical or moral meanings. He is apparently caring about ethical concerns. In fact, he has introduced a different face from the US comparing to what was previously heard from Americans. It seems that his statements originate from his mercantile mentality and profit based logic. So it's quite factual according to his real intentions and inner believes. Therefore, we must also have a real and logical approach to these statements.

Concerning his proclamations that that the United States should not act as a regional and global police, this is perhaps something that he already emphasized on it and it is also a reality that might be welcomed by the majority of the world's people. In fact, many of the United States' opponents in the region justified their opposition to the policies of the United States on the same basis. No country, including the United States, wants to be the gendarme of the world and invade other countries. But the US president seems to have forgotten that many of regional and global conflicts are the legacy of US extensive policy and strategy. For this reason, the United States not only has ethical responsibility as President Bush said but also is legally responsibility for these conflicts.

From the time Afghanistan was invaded by the Soviet Union, to present, the United States has been present in Afghanistan alongside Afghan Mujahideen against the former puppet regime of Soviet Union and now against international terrorists. Therefore, even if the United States withdraws all its forces from the region and Afghanistan and even closes all its communications with the region, it cannot keep itself away from the regional issues.

Terrorism is like a dangerous global virus; if the world fails to make a global consensus against terrorist, it will infect the entire world, including the United States. The attack on the World Trade Organization's twin towers in New York was a perfect example of this. According to much academic analysis, the growth of extremism and terrorism in the Middle East and South Asia region is directly linked to the past performance of the United States, and if they find opportunities, their first target will be the United States America and its interests in all corners of the world.

On the other hand, the United States has two important protocols signed with government of Afghanistan; these protocols between the two countries. However, given the experience of past, no one thinks that the US would truly implement the provisions of these protocols when it comes to the interests of Afghanistan. But legally, President Trump can fulfill his statements, if he officially cancels the signed documents and commitments signed between the two countries. Otherwise, according to international laws it is the responsibility of the United States to comply with the provisions of these two instruments.

Therefore, all countries, especially the United States, have a responsibility to fight against the virus of terrorism, and there is no reason to forsake this global duty. It is hoped that, as the Afghan government has requested, the US decision-making bodies may clarify the statements of President Trump, and more importantly, make him aware of his fundamental obligations in international relations.

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

Afghanistan's Rigid Cultural Norms; A Serious Challenge for Girls' Education (Part 1)

By: Hamidullah Bamik

Introduction
The Afghan government, headed by Hamid Karzai, the first elected president of Afghanistan after the collapse of Taliban's government in 2001 and its international donors with millions of dollars and other resources embarked a new era in Afghanistan. Since then the governmental and non-governmental organizations funded by international donors built many schools, recruited and educated teachers and instructors, and families started sending their progenies including girls to school. There is not an accurate statistic regarding the number of girls who went to schools during this period, but there is a widespread consensus that, since 2001, millions of girls who were deprived of gaining education during the Taliban's rule, found access to education.

Now that almost eighteen years have passed since the collapse of the Taliban's regime, the status of education particularly girls' education is not as good as it was expected. Roughly two-thirds of Afghan girls do not go to school according to the recent report published by the USAID. As the security situation worsens in Afghanistan, the progress that has been made towards girls' education may result in a reversal. Despite the infusion of millions of dollars by foreign countries and other international independent institutions, the Afghan government could not fight with rampant challenges especially rigid cultural norms that ban girls' education in Afghanistan. Girls are often kept at home because of harmful gender measures and these issues impede their education. Even on the basis of highly optimistic figures about the participation of girls in education, there are millions of girls in the country who have never been to school, and many more have just gone to school for a short time. When it comes to obstacles to girls' education in Afghanistan, the government and other relevant institutions often mention insecurity the main reasons for the exclusion of girls from schools. They rarely touch the issue of cultural norms that deprive girls from education more than insecurity. When the Taliban government collapsed in late 2001, the new Afghan government and its supporters, the countries that participated in the United States-led coalition in Afghanistan, faced with two major challenges: how to re-establish the educational system for half of the school-age population in a country with a high poverty rate and how to help girls who were excluded from education during the Taliban's era to go back to school. To achieve this goal, the Afghan government, international donors, and foreign countries invested hugely in girl's education in Afghanistan. They taught that by building schools, providing educational materials such as textbooks and other educational resources would help Afghan girls obtain education. There is no doubt that these aids paved the way for Afghan girls to find access to their basic rights - education. But unfortunately, neither the Afghan government nor the international organizations working on developing educational programs paid serious attention to one of the key challenges to girl's education - the prevailing rigid cultural norms among the communities and families that ban hundreds and thousands of girls from going to school in Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, there are still a large number of tribes and communities who assume women as home keepers and believe that they don't have any kind of responsibilities outside the home. Given that they are not interested too much in sending their daughters to school. They still consider some of the common social norms as taboos such as schooling girls. Regardless of the fact that housekeeping and home affairs should be done well and appropriately, girls need to gain education. Some communities in Afghanistan think that schooling girls are a disgrace and for justifying their reasons, they refer to religion that actually, there is not any religious justification for halting girls from obtaining education. Among the number of Afghans who consid-

er girls' education as taboo and forbidden, it is believed that women should raise their children and not spend their time in school. Being ignorant of the fact that raising children can be done better if a mother acquires education. However, these and dozens of other traditional beliefs in Afghanistan have caused a large number of girls to be deprived of going to school.

To fight with the abovementioned challenges, the Islamic Republic Government of Afghanistan passed the Law on the Prohibition of Violence Against Women in August 2009. This law for the first time in Afghanistan considers child marriage, forced marriage, compulsory self-immolation and other 19 types of violence against women, including rape as a crime, and for those who commit imposed a penalty. Although the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women is an essential step in the eradication of violence against women and girls, it does not help girls have access to education. In other words, the above law does not help girls and women in the fight against the rigid traditional norms and values that ban them from gaining education.

According to the Constitutional Law of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, education is the right of all citizens and is provided free of charge by the state. To this end, the government is required to design and implement effective programs in order to promote the balanced distribution of education throughout Afghanistan, to provide compulsory secondary education. This constitutional principle stipulates the need for access to quality and balanced education services for all citizens of the country, regardless of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, gender and physical status. Article 44 of the 2004 Constitutional Law of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan specifically deals with the education of women. According to this principle, the government is obligated to plan and implement effective programs for the balancing and development of women's education. Another part of the government's obligation is to comply with a number of international treaties. These treaties include Third Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. Under the two treaties, the Afghan government is required to provide all children with access to primary education.

The Prevailing Challenges towards Girls' Education

Early and Child Marriage: More than half of the girls in Afghanistan are getting married before reaching the age of 19, of which 40% are between the ages of 10 and 13, 32% at age 14 and 27% at the age of 15. The United Nations holds that seven million and 300,000 girls are getting married before reaching the legal age around the world every year, of which 12 percent are Afghan girls. According to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, the main reasons for the rise of forced and underage marriages in Afghanistan are poverty, unfair socialization, insecurity, and the continuing impunity culture. But researchers argue that illiteracy is the main reason for child marriage in Afghanistan. So, as girls get married, they do not continue their education. When they are kept illiterate as their parents, their daughters encounter the same fate as they faced after getting married.

In a country where a third of the girls marry before age 18, the marriage of children leaves many girls out of education. The minimum age for marriage for girls is in accordance with Afghanistan's Constitutional Law is 16. In practice, the law is less enforced, which is why most girls are married before the age stipulated in the law. The consequences of marriage for children are very detrimental and lead to the exclusion from education. Other losses due to child marriage include serious health hazards, including the deaths of girls and their children due to early pregnancy. Girls who are married at an early age may also be more likely to be victims of domestic violence than girls who are married at a later age.

Hamidullah Bamik is a Fulbright Scholar and Graduate Student in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Missouri-Columbia, USA. He can be reached at hamidullahbamik@mail.missouri.edu

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

Daily
Outlook
AFGHANISTAN
The Leading Independent Newspaperافغانستان
The Daily Afghanistan Ma

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.