

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

Daily Outlook  
AFGHANISTAN  
The Leading Independent Newspaper

January 23, 2019

**Curbing Terrorism and Extremism Aptly**

Nothing has influenced Afghan society as much as insecurity and terrorism. The country was turned into a battle ground by super power to show their dominance in the region. Later the civil war targeted the country and made the poor people suffer because of its ugly outcomes. Soon after that Taliban gained power and made the society further suffer backwardness and religious extremism. Both these factors blocked all the ways towards peace and stability. However, since the downfall of Taliban, there have been expectations that the country would move towards a certain level of stability. But, that does not seem to be coming.

Even today, the country is largely influenced by religious extremism and terrorism. It does not only target the innocent people who suffer because of lack of opportunities for a secure life but also challenge the entire security apparatus within the country. The authorities responsible for peace and security do not seem to have any idea of how to face the overgrowing security challenges; whereas, insecurity and terrorism give rise to many other types of social evils that have the capacity to further disturb the society.

Afghanistan faces huge and massive social issues, primarily due to terrorism as we have openly let the militant groups to carry out their business in accordance to their will. So militancy and anarchy flourish and grow as powerful as a second state or system within the state.

In fact, the different regional players with the help of the extremists in the country sponsored a mindset that flourished the militancy. The seeds that were sown were bound to turn into trees and bear fruits, which currently we are reaping - there are many factions in our country who promote extremism and militancy as the rudimentary and essential ideology. The so-called clerics condemn the state for the control measures and salute the extremists despite their relationships with the greedy powers, while our government does not have even the courage to curse the extremism explicitly. They have been very lenient to them and have no other option but to be apologetic. Nation is put to the dilemma and paradoxes, only to give time to the so-called reconciliation and peace process, which is nowhere to be seen. What has, in fact, been achieved is growing terrorism, militancy and bloodshed of innocent people.

While cruelty is being silent, giving the misinformation is worse. Where the worst crime is having the responsibility and power to control and still doing nothing. While the response to such a crime is not closing eyes, which we all are doing at the moment. Despite the knowledge of the truth and false, manipulation of the events as a second theorem is only an eye wash to keep the nation in worse condition and to promote the agenda of the enemy of the nation.

The authoritative people in our country need to understand that with great power comes great responsibility. They have to use their authorities not to dodge the common people but to guarantee for them a better life as they have promised to do so while acquiring their positions.

Some, not all, of the centers of the Islamic education called Madrassas are responsible for feeding the young and empty minds with terrorism, which leads to the militancy in return. These centers were once supported and sponsored by the internal extremists and external players.

The history is not very kind and it has proved that the lethal weapon of terrorism that was made in our country is now targeting our new generation. The fact is we cannot slay the giant we have fed! But now, the time has reached - the gift of the terrorism that is being exchanged from hand to hand, from the generation to the next, has to be stopped.

This cancer of the nation will be death of the nation unless we take the proper parameters and promote the unity, moderation and education. If we promote harmony and equality to achieve social equity then surely we will get rid of the menace of terrorism. We require strengthening the economy of each individual among the 95% of the nation, rather than strengthening the pockets of the 5% elite, else this cancer will not leave them alive even. And, then we have to be hopeful that one day, the tears and the blood, the sigh and the hopelessness will bring the change, which will be proved by slaps on face of the cruel and their supporters; this nation will decide who lives and who dies, who is socially evil and who is good, who is responsible and who is culprit. And the day is soon to come when justice and freedom will be restored and all the people of the country will have better opportunities to live their lives with peace and tranquility.

**A Glance at the Eight Years Performance of Afghan Parliament**

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

The parliament of Afghanistan (Wolsi Gerga) has begun its winter vacation after eighth working years and many of the parliament members went on vacation to follow their personal business. During these eight years, the parliament has faced lots of ups and downs which are worth of study to be a lesson for the next term of it. The members of parliament were repeatedly blamed for being involved in lawlessness, corruption, racism and nonattendance to the formal parliament sessions. They went on winter vacation but during these eight years of summer or winter vacation, they have rarely visited their clients to become aware of their conditions that are located far from the central facilities. While, the main philosophy of the parliamentary representation is to address the demands and problems of people to the government agencies and decision-makers, and thereby defend their rights. Moreover, they should try to shape the policies and laws which respond to the needs of their clients with supporting sustainable and equitable development.

In the other words, Parliament is a central institution of democracy to embody the will of people in government, and carries all their expectations that democracy will be truly responsive to their needs and help to solve the most pressing problems that confront them in their daily lives. As the elected body that represents society in all its diversity, parliaments have a unique responsibility for reconciling the conflicting interests and expectations of different groups and communities through the democratic means of dialogue and compromise. The legislative organ, parliaments have the task of adapting society's laws to its rapidly changing needs and circumstances. As the body entrusted with the oversight of government, they are responsible for ensuring that governments are fully accountable to the people. Citizens must have access to information about parliamentary proceedings, legislation, and policy, and be able to engage in continual dialogue with parliamentarians.

Meanwhile, the institution of parliament has also certain legal rights and freedom to work free from government interferences; thereon, we witnessed a lot contrasts between government and parliament, especially in few last years; the parliamentarians criticized government for blocking their decisions, lack of meritocracy, inability and growing insecurity challenges; for example, once the parliament has voted to dismiss six ministers due to shortcomings in their performance and their failure to spend all allocated budgetary funds on time. The dismissals were accordance with provisions in the Afghan constitution that gave parliament the power to sack ministers if they fail to perform their job accordance with the law. This was faced with criticism or confrontation of government which resulted retentions of many acting ministers. They also blamed both President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah for not acting upon their pledges to bring about systematic reforms in Afghanistan's election system. They have leveled serious

accusations against government leaders about what they claim to be a deliberate attempt by government to delay the polls and implement reforms in the election system after assuming office.

Overall, what has seriously dissatisfied people is retention of acting ministers and lack of reforms in election system by government and lack of playing a unifying role by the parliament. It was highly expected that parliamentarians solidify the national unity in the home of the nation but sometimes it has played a reverse role. Many of tribal disputes affected the nation's home, and even some of the ethnic controversy was thrown inside the assembly. Some of them supported the social movements while others strongly opposed that; some of them voted the government ministers on the basis of ethnicity while others opposed them. Thus, ethnic war and using physical violence in public meetings with each other, opposition and adherence to ethnic criteria are some of the examples that unfortunately indicate the ethnic orientations of the members of the parliament. While the House of Representatives or the home of the nation should be a good example of democratic values while it was changed to a place for ethnic conflicts.

As a result, the House of Representatives lost its credibility as one of the most important institutions of the Afghan state; unfortunately, it has come with many doubts due to the length of parliament from one hand and widespread corruption and tribal conflicts on the other hand. If the other parts of governments face with illegitimacy question, there is a specific mainstay under the name of the house of the nation to solve or compensate the shortcoming but when parliament itself engulfs with such issues then there is no prescription to solve the problem. Therefore, many Afghans have a completely negative view from the parliament and the people's representation and the democratic values. Even in public opinion, the House of Representatives is blamed as a place where its members are busy with personal economic and financial deal; that's why it is called the broker house not house of the nation.

Now that nearly four years have elapsed from its legal terms but they continued their job in a sort of an emergency and almost illegal condition, and they continued their job without any explicit legal justification. It is hoped that until they return from the holiday the outcome of parliamentary election would be clear, but it is highly important to learn from the mistakes and challenges that were experienced by the previous parliament. The expectations of the people of Afghanistan are that the 17th parliament to perfectly portray democratic values and dispossess the culture of ethnocentrism from the political arena of the country. However, considering the election which was held on 20th of October 2018, and the problems that occurred during the election process across the country, it is unclear how the new parliamentarians would perform in their coming term.

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**Afghan National Unity Government: The Golden Era for Afghan Women's Development**

By: Hamidullah Bamik

The Afghan National Unity Government was established in June 2014. The life of the Afghan National Unity Government is approaching to its end legally. During these four years, President Ghani and Chief Executive, Dr. Abdullah had made many promises to the people. The most important ones were holding Loy Jira for Amendment of Constitutional Law, issuing the electronic ID Cards, reforming the election bodies and many more other promises. Despite all the problems, unfulfilled commitments and promises, and other paradoxical political statements issued by the Afghan National Unity Government for reforms in Afghanistan, the Afghan National Unity Government is worthy of being praised and admired for providing opportunities for Afghan women and girls to demonstrate their potentials - to prove that they are not weaker than men. They can play a constructive role in the economic, social, educational and political aspects if given the chance. They can prove that gender does not determine someone's talent, capacity, and competences. They can be the winners, too, in any kind of competition and under any kind of circumstances as long as the processes are meritocratic and transparent.

Opportunities and Competences

The followings are the instances of some of these opportunities provided by the Afghan National Unity Government to women. These Afghan women were able to occupy high-political positions during the National Unity Government either via competitive recruitment processes or through Afghanistan's president's directives.

Last year in December 2018, the Afghan government appointed the Deputy Foreign Minister of the country, Adila Raz, as the permanent representative of Afghanistan at the United Nations. This is the first time a woman from Afghanistan has been appointed to represent the country at the United Nations. Ms. Raz succeeded Mahmud Saikal, who had been presenting Afghanistan for the past four years at the United Nations.

Ms. Adila Raz has studied her postgraduate in the United States in diplomacy. She previously worked as Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Cooperation in Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ms. Raz was a vice presidential spokeswoman for former president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, and then also a deputy head of his office. Ms. Raz also previously has worked for the UN in Kabul for some time.

In another unprecedented example, Kabul Municipality for the first time announced that 11 women have been selected as the deputy districts in different districts of Kabul. As the Kabul Municipality argued that the goal was to increase women's participation in urban affairs activities, fight against corruption and attract people's cooperation.

Likewise, last year in November 2018, the Afghan government appointed Ms. Roya Rahmani as Ambassador of Afghanistan to the United States. Ms. Rahmani was previously appointed as Afghan Ambassador to Indonesia in 1395. She has replaced Hamdullah Mohab, who serves currently as the National Security Adviser of Afghanistan.

Ms. Roya Rahmani studied at Columbia University of New York and McGill, Canada, and before 1395, she was the director of the Department of Foreign Affairs' Regional Cooperation Division. In addition to Ms. Rahmani, Afghanistan has also selected other women as ambassadors. Currently, Ms. Soraya Dalil is Afghan ambassador to Switzerland, and Shukria Barakzai is on the mission as ambassador to Norway and Shahgul Rezaei is also Afghanistan's ambassador to Tajikistan.

Recently, the Afghan government appointed Ms. Marjan Mateen as the new deputy minister for curriculum and teacher training of Ministry of Education. Ms. Mateen has an MA from the Jawaharlal Nehru University of India. Previously, she has been a university professor for several years. Her previous portfolio also focused on education and youth development.

The above-mentioned Afghan women who joined the Afghan National Unity Government are just a few examples. The list of Afghan women serving in the entire governmental institutions is beyond the scope of this paper. But overall, currently, the presence of women working in the Afghan government offices is 22 percent. At the beginning of 2018, the Afghan Reform Office announced a new plan to increase women's participation in government institutions. According to the Afghan Reform Office officials, women's participation in government agencies was expected to increase by 2 percent in 2018, and women's share of the gov-

ernment would reach 30 percent in the next two years.

Although the situation of women in Afghanistan has improved since 2001 in sectors like education, health, and political participation, the results and progress are still far behind the objectives of the national gender strategy and international obligations. Women in Afghanistan remain highly vulnerable related to security, domestic violence, social marginalization, and limited access to assets and justice. For instance, Ms. Zarifa Ghaffari was appointed as Mayor of Maidan Shahar, the capital of Wardak, a province in western Kabul, about six months ago via the Afghan presidential decree, had not been able to begin her career due to the "patriarchal" view and the intervention of local powerful people. So, it demonstrates that despite the tangible achievements of Afghan women over the past years, there are still serious challenges toward their participations in governmental institutions.

The above instances of providing opportunities for women echo one pivotal point that the Afghan National Unity Government has done far more than the previous government for gender equality and women's participation in Afghanistan. Some may argue that all the above appointees have political reasons. Whatever the reason is, but I firmly believe that this is the only way for Afghan youths - males and females - to enter the politics, power, business and governmental institutions. I strongly believe that the only way to have shared in the political power is entering the governmental institutions. And, merely blaming the government for its weaknesses and flaws gets us nowhere. There is no government in the world flawless and absolutely transparent, accountable and honest in its services. On the other hand, as the famous saying goes on: Rome was not built in a day. So, it takes time to fix all the problems of Afghanistan and hence we had better be patient and optimistic rather than being cynic and having dark views.

Recommendations:

As an educational policy and human capital analyst, I am inclined to articulate that gender inequality is rooted in the cultural norms and values of Afghan society. So as to fight and challenge these rigid and male dominated cultural norms, the government of Afghanistan, and very particularly the educational sectors of Afghanistan should begin fighting with gender inequality from schools. Because schools are the main places where children learn cultural norms and embody them when they enter society later as civil servants and officers. Having said that I have the following suggestions for the Afghan government and responsible entities for addressing the issue of gender inequality:

First, introduce a new compulsory subject Gender Education - aimed at developing a social and political understanding of gender in as part of the official school curriculum for both boys and girls, at the post-primary level in all state and central education boards. Explicit conversations and critical dialogues on gender bias and power should officially become part of the student experience. Defining Gender Education as a standalone curricular subject will give it legitimacy and create a stronger impetus for incorporating gender in the classroom. This will also necessitate the development of the requisite curricular and teacher materials, which the curriculum and teacher training department of Ministry of Education should create in collaboration with NGOs like the USAID Promote: Women in Government Project and other relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Second, incorporate gender education compulsorily, in pre- and in-service teacher training and teacher education programs. Teachers are potentially powerful agents of social change, provided they can perceive themselves as such. Training in effective communication of gender-related issues with the community should also be included in pre-service training. All of the above implies intensive in-service training of teachers and educators, along with the development of teacher training materials and curriculum, which should be created by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with NGOs.

Together these commitments form a robust policy mandate that supports the integration of gender equality and empowerment programming in the post-primary education in schools across Afghanistan. At every social and political platform, there is a call to change deeply entrenched patriarchal 'mindsets.' School education is a good place to facilitate mindset change in a whole generation of boys and girls. To do this, it is time we made our curriculum truly progressive by including lessons in gender equality.

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