

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



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## Our Educational Needs Have Increased

Education is considered a social instrument through which man can pursue his destiny and determine his future. An unenlightened mind is nothing but a sorry lamp to light the steps of any man or woman. In his famous book "Islamic", Muhammad Marmaduke Pick Thai writes: "Neither the Holy Qur'an nor the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) ever contemplated the existence of an ignorant Muslim".

Indeed, ignorant Muslim is a contradiction to the true teachings of Islam. In fact, at certain period of their history, the Muslims began to turn their backs upon a part of what had been enjoined to them. They discarded half the Shariah - the part which ordered them to seek Knowledge and education and the Christians of the West, about the same time, began to act according to that portion of the Shariah which the Muslims were discarding and so advanced in educational sphere. Thus the Muslim countries kept on suffering in the educational sector and today they find themselves quite behind the West in this regard. Afghanistan is also among the countries that is suffering from serious problems in its education system. In fact, our education system has failed to achieve the objectives and it has not been able to change the society according to its cherished goal.

Our educational needs have increased manifold and our educational system needs to be modified according to the basic and local needs of the people, while keeping the aim of installing in them inquisitiveness and curiosity. Today's education has many facets - academic, aesthetic, moral, spiritual, physical, social, practical, vocational and education for home life, citizenship and leisure.

All education is farce if it is not established according to its national as well as local needs. It is pity that our education has failed to promote a national consensus and education has not played its proper role in national development though its aims were very high. The reason for this failure has been the lack of talented, conscientious and devoted teachers. No effort was made to produce a class of teachers who could work sincerely for the implementation of these recommendations.

Our failure in the past few decades has no parallel. Although it is not possible to attribute this failure to any single factor, one can say with confidence that the entire planning in the field of education has been lopsided. The structure of any progressive education system capable of meeting the demands of any modern nation or state has to be like a pyramid, widest at the base tapering systematically to the top of high specialization. Another reason for failure of education system is that the affairs of education were conducted by the persons who had the least experience in this field, or sorry to say, they lacked competence and proper education. Consequently, in our educational system, the base was never really broadened.

On the one hand, the people were deprived of their basic right of education and on the other they were not given the necessary-directions to be productive to the state.

Unless education both for citizenship and leaderships is provided, no good results can be expected. Let the past history serve as a great lesson for us. Managers may or may not be necessary but leaders are essential.

Our educational system has long suffered from the managerial type of administration. It is a type of administration that is static, dull, non-progressive, and favoring the status quo. Maintaining such an administration is not relevant for the educational system of a country like Afghanistan. Our education needs re-orientation. It needs leaders who are properly motivated, adequately dynamic. They should not be problem-blind but have a broad vision, deep insight and genuine understanding of the issue involved. They must be imbued with the spirit of Islam and investigation and scientific outlook at the same time. They should also have the willingness to work enthusiastically so that our educational system may play a fundamental part in the preservation of the ideals which can lead us towards unity and integration and at the same time survival in the times to come.

The moral and spiritual values of Islam combined with the principles of freedom, integrity and strength should be the ideology to inspire our educational system. We should make every effort to compete in the race of higher science and technology in a world which intends to move towards development and progress. We have to ensure that there is a massive shift from extremist and obsolete educational system to a more meaningful and thought-provoking one. It is essential that every student who comes out of an educational institution should carry with him enough skills to be absorbed in our socio-economic framework as a good worker.

Our education should be a comprehensive system aimed not only to educate the mind and to make the students achieve economic independence, but also to help them build up their character and a healthy attitude to life. They should be so equipped as to defeat all the evil forces that endanger the very existence of our country such as terrorism, ethnic issues, class distinctions, religious intolerance, bribery, corruption, nepotism, robbery, black-marketing, smuggling, Ignorance and political and social injustice. That is the only way we would be able to move towards development and progress and a true change.



## The Centralized Political System Deepening The Crises

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

The centralized political system recognized one of the key factors to deepening the crises in Afghanistan. The reason is that the highly centralized model that was chosen for Afghanistan has neither served the people nor the government itself. The current model divided the country into 34 provinces, 399 districts, approximately 217 municipalities, and roughly 40,020 villages. Although the number of provinces and districts has changed, the basic form of the government predates the 2004 constitution and can be traced to the reign of Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901) and the 1923 constitution, Afghanistan's first. The current text is nearly identical to the constitution promulgated in 1964 by Zahir Shah. Therefore, there is a consensus within and outside Afghanistan that the idea of centralization was potentially a major strategic blunder for the new Afghan political structure. Given Afghanistan's multi-ethnic society along with its diverse political realities, the centralized political system has further intensified the crisis and led to political turmoil and instability. One of the main fallouts of the system were the past presidential elections of 2004, 2009 and 2014 that remained contentious due to the centrality of power.

Historically, the greater the distance from Kabul and the country's main urban centers, the weaker the writ of Afghan governments has tended to be. There have been several causes of its limited reach, including the existence of powerful local elites, adjacent foreign empires, strong tribal structures, the absence of infrastructure adequate for the country's rugged geography and at times inhospitable climate, and limited ability to project military power. While some of these factors have been overcome in the course of time, many remain.

This has created a society in which power relations between national, provincial and local elites have tended to be established through negotiation and compromise rather than by decree and (administrative) enforcement.

Although the make-up of local elites has profoundly changed during Afghanistan's different episodes of (civil) war, communities continue to expect an appreciable measure of autonomy and self-governance. The limited reach of the state combined with local expectations of autonomy also mean that policies, laws and decrees emanating from Kabul do not necessarily gain traction outside of the capital, let alone outside of the country's major urban centers. Technically, there are no local governments in Afghanistan except for municipalities, at least not if we define local governments as autonomous corporate entities with some binding decision-making power and some discretion over their financial resources.

Afghans have nothing like state and county administrations, with their elections, levies, assessments, and budgets. What they have instead are provincial and district offices of the central state: Provincial and district-level government in Afghanistan is no more than the aggregation of governors' offices and the provincial and district-level representatives of the country's "line ministries". Under current presidential system, political power is highly concentrated in the president's office, leaving regional

officials with little political, administrative or financial authority. Provincial governors are appointed by the president and council leaders are not elected officials.

The foundation of the new political order, based on a centralized state given Afghanistan's geography and polity, was problematic from the very start. As proved later, a highly powerful presidential system has been detrimental for Afghanistan and its political future.

By and large, the country such as Afghanistan which is lacking a high political culture, centralization has failed to bring peace and stability that the country desperately needs. The effectiveness of National Unity Government (NUG) has also suffered unforeseen setbacks due to this political centralization. The NUG which was formed following the last year's disputed elections did not produce any winner. Despite the fact the elections did not grant uncontested authority to any of the candidates, the political camp of President Ghani has sought to hold onto power. This has, in turn, created a lack of confidence and co-operation between the Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah and President Ashraf Ghani as the two main leaders of the NUG.

Now, the NUG is unable to perform well is because of the centrality of the power; too much concentration of authority within the presidential palace has led to the relegation of key ministers such as Defense and Interior whose authority has been significantly curtailed.

This has further added to mistrust among the leaders of the national unity government particularly in administrative tasks and appointments of the senior officials. These developments are taking place at a time when good governance in order to stabilize the country is most needed.

That is only possible through a stable political system with greatest representation that can serve the people. Political stability remains the major prerequisite for the security and economic development of Afghanistan. Without a stable political system that can deliver for the people, the country will never achieve the envisioned peace and prosperity.

Therefore, the optimum solution for a politically secure and economically stable Afghanistan, that is not only important for the security and prosperity of its own but also for the region, is devolution of political power.

As noted, centralization has been at odds with Afghanistan's social, political and economic realities and has not brought stability thus far. Hence, a decentralized system would ensure that provincial governors are independent, their councils are legislative, and that they are elected officials by the people.

This would lead to good governance and successful exercise of power in close cooperation with local and tribal leaders in 34 provinces nation-wide. Likewise, constitutional amendment that entails creation of a prime ministerial position has become the urgent need of time. That would be a step in the right direction towards decentralization and - concomitantly - a strong, sustainable and representative.

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## Connectivity and the Modern Refugee

By Filippo Grandi

They were fresh off the boat, the group of refugees I met this time last year. They had fled their homes in Syria, traveled halfway across Turkey, and placed their lives in the hands of a gang of people smugglers promising to get them to Europe. Despite all that they had endured, one of them told me, upon landing on the Greek island of Lesbos, that they had panicked only once during that perilous voyage: when their mobile phone signal disappeared.

That signal, however weak, had been the refugees' only link to the outside world. When it vanished - when they truly had no way to contact family, friends, or anyone who could help them - they were gripped by a sense of isolation and fear more intense than they had ever experienced. It is a feeling no one should have to endure ever again.

For most people in the industrialized world - and everyone at this year's World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos - connectivity is a fact of life. We have mobile phones, tablets, and computers, all linked to superfast - and accelerating - broadband networks. Add to that an ever-increasing number of social-media platforms, and we are always in contact with one another. Information flows so freely and relentlessly, in fact, that we tend to worry more about overload than scarcity. For refugees, life is very different.

Globally, refugees are 50% less likely than the general population to have an Internet-enabled phone, and 29% of refugee households have no phone at all. Though 90% of refugees located in urban environments live in places with 2G or 3G coverage, about a fifth of those living in rural areas have no connectivity at all. This is a big deal. For refugees, connectivity is not a luxury, but a lifeline - one that has become all the more important at a time when sentiment in many host countries is turning against them (even as plenty of grassroots movements and communities remain eager to help).

In some cases, technology can do what hostile politicians and reluctant governments will not: give refugees a chance to rebuild their lives.

Connectivity means, at the most fundamental level, being able to remain in contact with family members left behind, some of whom may still be at risk of violence or persecution. Connectivity also provides access to important and up-to-date information about new threats, such as disease outbreaks or the spread of conflict, or the availability of necessities like food and water, clothing, shelter, and health care.

In the longer term, connectivity can support online education and training that equips refugees for the workforce. It can help them find employment, and link them with legal or other crucial services. And it can enable them to communicate more eas-

ily with organizations like the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), telling us what they need most, what we're getting right, and where we need to make changes.

In a world of unlimited data, there is little stopping us from providing refugees with this lifesaving connectivity. If we are smart about how we design digital aid systems, we will have the opportunity to broaden our partnerships to hundreds, if not thousands, of organizations worldwide that are willing to help refugees.

Realizing this potential requires overcoming two key challenges. First, we must figure out how to improve connectivity for refugees today. Second, we must position ourselves to use technology more effectively tomorrow.

Overcoming these challenges will require, first and foremost, that governments improve access, including by investing in the necessary digital infrastructure. It will also require contributions from the private sector, particularly telecommunications providers, which can lend their technological expertise, global reach, and spending power to help ensure access to affordable phones and computers, inexpensive data plans, and training in digital literacy.

Success on these fronts will require using microwave links, satellite dishes, unused television spectrum, drones, and balloons to improve wireless Internet access and capabilities in locations containing many refugees. Because the vast majority of today's refugees are in developing countries, improved connectivity would carry far-reaching benefits for the host communities.

In 2014, my colleagues encountered a young Syrian man called Hany, who had fled the city of Homs with his family and found refuge in a camp in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

A poet, rapper, and photographer, Hany was such a force of nature that it took my colleagues a while to realize he had a serious eye condition and could see only a few inches in front of his face. His mobile phone was utterly essential.

It enabled him to learn English, take his first photographs, and call for help when he needed it. That same phone rang one day with the news that the city of Regina, Canada, was to be his new home. As he put it, "my phone is my little world."

For refugees like Hany, staying connected is not only a matter of survival; it also provides a route to self-reliance and independence, boosting their own wellbeing and enabling them to contribute to the communities that host them. Last year, the World Economic Forum launched a program called Internet For All. We must ensure that "All" includes refugees. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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