

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



July 03, 2016

The Importance of Foreign Policy

In modern times no state can avoid involvement in the international sphere. This involvement must be systematic and based on some well-defined principles. The principle and the purpose of a state is reflected in its foreign policy. The importance of foreign policy is accepted widely and it basically defines a state's approach towards the other states.

A foreign policy should protect the territorial integrity of the country and protect the interests of its citizens, both within and outside the country. Generally for this purpose the states prefer to follow policy of status quo. If a state pursues a policy which seeks to upset the status quo it is branded as revisionist and arouses the suspicion of other members of the international community. It has to protect the interests of its citizens both inside and outside the state, for the maintenance of its prestige.

Secondly, the objective of foreign policy should be the maintenance of links with other members of international community and adoption of policy of conflict or cooperation towards them with a view to promote its own interests. Moreover, the foreign policy of a country should seek to promote and further its national interests of the country. The primary interests of each state is preservation, security and well-being of its citizens. Often, the interests of various states come in clash and the states have their interests bearing in mind this factor.

At the same time, the foreign policy should aim at promotion of economic interests of the country. As the status of a state is largely determined by its economic status, the states try to pursue a foreign policy which can contribute to their economic prosperity and enable it in turn to play a more effective role in international politics. Most of the treaties and agreements concluded by the state with other members of international community are essentially designed to protect and promote the economic interests of these states. Ultimately, the foreign policy aims at enhancement of the influence of the state either by expanding its area of influence or reducing the other state to the position of dependency.

It is important to see whether Afghanistan's foreign policy is able to pursue these objectives in their true spirit. Unfortunately, because of certain factors like years of instability and economic and political fragility have made the country dependent on others to a large extent and, therefore, the true objectives of the foreign policy could never be achieved. Moreover, the country could not define and pursue properly its national interests and, resultantly, remained weaker in international arena.

There are different factors that influence the foreign policy of a country. In the first place the size of a state's territory and its population greatly influences its foreign policy. Generally, the leaders and people of a country with small territory and population do not expect their country to carry great weight in international affairs. On the other hand, the leaders and people of large countries are ready to assume special responsibilities. However, sometime even small states which have rich resources also leave a deep impact on world politics.

The geography of a country, including its fertility, climate, location in relation to other land masses and water-ways etc. also influence the country's foreign policy. It is a major factor in determining self-sufficiency of a country. Generally land-locked countries, nations in the tropics and those bordering a superpower are less self-sufficient in comparison to the countries which have access to warm-water ports or are located in the temperate zones and far removed from superpowers.

The cultural and historical traditions of a country also deeply influence the foreign policy. Generally, people possessing a unified common culture and historical experience can pursue an effective foreign policy because of the support of all sections of society who share the same values and memories. On the other hand, a country which is culturally and historically fragmented cannot pursue an equally effective foreign policy.

Apart from these internal factors there are certain external factors as well that influence the foreign policy of a country. The contemporary international organizations greatly influence the foreign policy of a country. While formulating its foreign policy the country has to take note of the international law, treaties and contracts. No country can ignore these factors without jeopardizing its own interests. Apart from the structure at the global level, the structures at the regional and sub-regional levels also greatly influence the foreign policy of a country.

In case of Afghanistan, the international influence is on a large scale. As the country has been dependent on international organizations and other powerful and some neighboring countries, its foreign policy has always been under pressure. As far as the internal factors are concerned, Afghanistan's geography, though gifted with mineral resources, has been the battle ground for great games. This has influenced the country to a great extent. On the other hand, the country's cultural heterogeneity has always hindered creation of a homogenous national sentiments.

Hidden Challenges Leading to Weak Generation

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

A large number of Afghan children are suffering from non-press or hidden crisis called malnourishment, and we are witnessing epidemic of behavior problems and learning disorders in our children both schools, Universities and communities. While treatment of these hidden challenges is very costly for our society - not only in terms of the financial cost, but also in terms of emotional cost as a future generation. No attention is focused on diet and nutrition for the treatment and prevention of these tragic conditions in Afghanistan!

Most of social and political issues caused to forget some fundamental topics, and discussions on the mental and emotional development of children ignore the fact that brain is a very important organ of the body, and just like every other organ of the body, it requires good nutrition. And when we talk about the brain, we also need to talk about the second brain, the small intestine, where digestion and assimilation take place. The brain looks like guts, and they have similar interrelated effects in many ways. For example, there are just as many nerve cells in the gut as there are in the brain, and most of the nerve cells in the gut connect with the brain.

The nutritional requirements of brain and guts need to be considered together when we talk about emotional and mental health of our children and next generation. And we need to have this conversation very soon because we are facing an incredible crisis, the likes of which we have never seen before in the history of mankind. Some children are damaged so profoundly that they cannot even make emotional contact with their parents and their siblings. And also we have thousands of children who are retarded due to iodine deficiencies and malnourishment. But these retarded individuals could express emotions. Today the horrible condition called autism along with other manifestation of brain starvation such as learning disorders, mental problems, and inability to concentrate behavior problems, violence, addiction and mental retardation threaten the fabric of our culture.

Many of the problems are directly linked to poor government guidelines, chronic poverty and unawareness of parents throughout the country. And now what are we going to do? How do we get back to having normal children, and how do we help the children who have these problems?

Role of vitamins

According to experts, quality of food and certain nutrients such as vitamins A, D, B12 and K2 are the most critical factors for the brain to form, to develop and to function properly, for good mental health and for nervous system to function normally, and deficiencies manifest as psychiatric disorders, such as obsessive-compulsive behavior, irrational anger, depression, manic depression, Alzheimer's and dementia. And where do we get these nutrients? Do we get them from vegetable oils? No, do we get them from imported chemicals? No, do we get them from margarine?

Only a little bit of synthetic vitamin A added to the margarine. We get them from the fat of grass-fed animals—the very food that are disappearing from our daily diets.

Iodine and iron deficiencies

Shortages of nutrients such as iron and iodine can impair cognitive and motor development, and these effects are often irreversible. Iodine deficiency can lead to enlargement of the thyroid and irreparable mental retardation in infants and children whose mothers were iodine deficient during pregnancy.

Similarly, there is growing evidence that DHA, an essential fatty acid, is a key component of the intensive production of synapses that makes the first years of life a critical period of learning and development. Many other nutrients—chlorine, folic acid, and zinc, to name just a few—have been linked specifically to early brain functioning.

Infect, the role of nutrition in brain development is complex. The effects of most nutrient shortages depend on the extent and duration of the shortage, and in many cases, the brain's need for a particular nutrient changes throughout its development. Early shortages can reduce cell production; later shortages can affect cell size and complexity. Nutrient deficits also affect the complex chemical processes of the brain and can lead to less efficient communication between brain cells. Food insecurity also linked to nutrient deficiencies that lead to learning and development problems, especially among infants and toddlers. Long-term effects include low achievement in schools (particularly amongst Afghan-girls due to food discrimination between boys and girls in the families), emotional problems, and poor health. A recent study, finds that compared to their peers in food-secure families, food-insecure children under age 3 are:

90 percent more likely to have poor health

31 percent more likely to spend time in the hospitals

76 percent more likely to have problems in cognitive, language, and behavioral development

Based on the above, if we want to have intelligent, happy and well-adjusted children, we will need to combat poverty, support our natural live stocks, train food experts in national universities and publically, raise mass awareness. People need to be aware of Function of adequate nutrition for pregnant mothers and infants for normal brain development. They must know that Pregnancy and infancy are important periods for the formation of the brain, laying the foundation for the development of cognitive, motor, and socio-emotional skills throughout childhood and adulthood. Children with restricted development of these skills during early life are at risk for later neuropsychological problems, poor school achievement, early school dropout, low-skilled employment, and poor care of their own children, thus contributing to the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

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

Prospects for the Afghan Armed Forces in the NATO's Warsaw Summit

By Naser Koshan

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

Afghanistan as a non-NATO member state but an ally in the war against terror will always remain a focal point when it comes to NATO's foreign mission. NATO's contribution in assisting the Afghan indigenous forces has been both plausible, and key to the ongoing battle against the Taliban. Afghan armed forces will extremely depend on this support for a foreseeable future till a financially self-reliant Afghanistan bear the cost of its own defense forces, and provide the budget for its effective operation.

Having a military partner like NATO is a huge advantage for the Afghan armed forces in the long run. They can get the best of their professional combat skills, and replicate the same to their future cadets and officers in the army. As we all know, disciplinary principles lay the foundation for a well organized, and goals oriented military force, the Afghan armed forces are gradually adapting these values and have utilized the skills on the battle field to trash their nemesis, the Taliban.

Almost all NATO member states are already helping out their Afghan counterparts in numerous vocational areas; the Italians for instance, have long been involved in judiciary reforms and training Afghan judges and attorneys, while the French have spent millions in capacity building in the educational system. The U.S. and U.K. are contributing both financially, and with boots on the ground under the auspices of NATO's absolute support mission.

In addition, Germany a NATO member state has long been involved in the training process of the Afghan police. With their support, Afghanistan has become able to just have enough policing personnel to police its citizens, and to some extent curb day to day criminal activities. No doubt, the Afghan police still require sophisticated technological enhancements as DNA labs, biometric, and a nationally unified background check database to better prevent and address the increasing number of terror and criminal plots taking place in the country.

Furthermore, NATO's member states are already providing roughly \$ 4 billion annually to train, equip, and keep the Afghan army operational and mobilized. This commitment is pledged to proceed for another 4 years, by 2020 the Afghan government is scheduled to take the charge, and fund their operations on its own means. Afghanistan, considering its current financial status will require both time and reform oriented policies to regenerate long dried up revenue sources for its operational costs, and gradually head towards a state fulfilling all its needs through its nationally funded budget.

Meanwhile, NATO's aerial support in conducting night raids against the Taliban has helped them neutralize key Taliban commanders, and weaken their core commanding infrastructure. Unfortunately, Afghanistan is fighting terror at multiple fronts simultaneously; it is not only the Taliban, but also the IS militants who are building their footprints in eastern Afghanistan. The armed forces that are already ill-equipped and experiencing mismanagement in the leadership hierarchy are incurring a huge casualty toll in the frontline. At this particular time, they need a positive reinforcement in equipment supplies and extraordinary commanders to provide them both the vision, and leadership to conduct successful military operations to minimize their casualties.

It is worth mentioning that the top Afghan military officials have realized the urgency to speed up the equipping process of the ANSF and have started a series of negotiations with the distant and close neighbors, the Afghan national security adviser is soon to pay an official visit to Moscow to discuss the same. Luckily all the regional countries have come to the understanding that the only way to keep terrorists at bay, and out of their respective borders is to join hands with Afghanistan and provide whatever they can to its military establishment.

As recently as last week, a top U.S. commander applauded the commitment and the patriotism the ANA have shown on the battle ground, the Afghan elite special forces is amongst the best in the region, capable of conducting sophisticated military operations as well as demonstrating leadership skills. I am sure there is a consensus in Kabul that the armed forces still need logistical and training support from their NATO counterparts for a good few years till they are both professionally and numerically ready to take the charge on their own, and provide the very much needed security to nation's open borders and that of its citizens.

Historically great armies always rely on modern weaponry, and sophisticated technological advantages, with this said, the Afghan army largely lacks aircrafts to assist their ground forces when engaged with the enemy, the Afghan terrain requires specific military transport planes, capable of landing in harsh weather and supplying the military basis with the needed ammunition and medical support. NATO member states' contribution in this regard will enable the ANSF to wage thriving offensive operations, and gradually stand on their own feet. Last but not least, the upcoming Warsaw conference is the right platform for the Afghan authorities to present a realistic proposal of their needs, and humbly request for the same to be fulfilled.

Naser Koshan is a freelance Afghan columnist based in Washington. He can be reached at naserkoshan@yahoo.com



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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.