

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



July 11, 2015

SCO Summit and Afghanistan

President Ashraf Ghani, along with a high level delegation attended two-day Shangai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Ufa city of Russia on Thursday and Friday. The visit was an important one and provided an opportunity to President to meet the heads of states of different regional countries and at the same time ask for their cooperation and support regarding the developments in Afghanistan.

SCO summit was basically founded in 2001 by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Afghanistan is not a member of SCO but it was given an observer status at the 2012 SCO summit in Beijing on June 6, 2012. Iran, Pakistan, India and Mongolia are also given observer status in the organization.

Speaking at the summit, President Ghani, as expected, stressed on economic cooperation among the regional countries and prioritization of regional security. He suggested that regional states should shift focus to launch big development projects, multiply trade and business and stabilize economic aimed at countering challenges.

While emphasizing on the security in Afghanistan he said that though there are security challenges, Afghan National Security Forces have the required capabilities to face these challenges successfully. He also emphasized that the soil of Afghanistan would not be used against the interest of other countries; and Afghanistan would be the center of regional cooperation not a center for regional rivalry.

There is no doubt in the fact that Afghanistan is going through some very serious challenges regarding growing insecurity nowadays. Taliban insurgents have continued their fighting in month of Ramadan as well and they have been able to gain the control of different districts in different provinces of the country. The northern parts of the country that used to be comparatively peaceful are now the main targets of the insurgents and certain districts in Takhar, Kunduz and Badakhshan have come under their control. In recent weeks, even the capital Kabul has experienced some very threatening attacks even in the most guarded parts of the city.

At the same time, the threats of growing number of Daesh recruits are also alarming. In order to face the dual challenge of fighting both Taliban and Daesh, Afghanistan would definitely require support from the regional countries, in particular. The SCO members can play a positive role in this regard and their dedicated attention regarding the growing insecurity in Afghanistan is of immense importance. Both Russia and China have accepted the fact that the growth of Daesh in Afghanistan can be a regional threat, and they have also emphasized on a strategy to combat this threat. If this emphasis is turned into practical steps, it would immensely support in disheartening Daesh's growth in Afghanistan.

In similar fashion, to control the threat of Taliban and to support Afghanistan in making peace talks successful with them, the worth of regional countries cannot be denied. Afghanistan, to a large extent, has relied on the role of Pakistan in this regard. President Ghani since the beginning of his government has strived for improved relations with Pakistan and emphasized on its role in holding peace talks with Taliban. Pakistan on the other hand has shown willingness in this regard as well. Few days earlier, the first formal talks between the representatives of Afghan government and Taliban took place in Murree, Pakistan by the support of Pakistan government.

President Ghani in SCO summit met Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and appreciated the upward trajectory of the Af-Pak relations. The two leaders expressed satisfaction over the progress made in the July 7 talks held to promote peace and reconciliation process. Both of them exchanged views on how to carry forward the peace process. They also exchanged views on the efforts being made by the respective sides to counter terrorism and extremism. Ghani appreciated Pakistan's efforts and its role in facilitating peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, expressing hope that these efforts would lead to lasting peace and stability in the country.

President Ghani also managed to meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Since, the inclination of Afghan government towards the Pakistan side, the relations between Afghanistan and India do not seem very comfortable. It is important that President Ghani must ensure balance in maintaining the relations with both Pakistan and India as India has been an important friend of Afghanistan.

Among the other leaders whom the President met were Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping and President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko. He discussed with them that the threats in region have increased and to counter them it is important to seek collective action. It is really imperative for the regional countries to see the problem of insecurity in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a collective issue and must cooperate so that the issue is addressed properly and on time. They seem to realize that they require acting collectively to face this threat but it is important that they must be able to put in practice comprehensive strategy to tackle the situation. Words and promises alone have never and would never solve the issue of terrorism and insurgency. Practical solutions are the only way out of the quagmire that can swallow the whole region in no time.

War Crime



Escalated Terrorism and Peace Parley – The Endless Paradox

By Hujjatullah Zia

Dozens of Afghan Local Police (ALP) were killed in cold blood on Thursday July 02 when heavily-armed insurgents stormed several police checkpoints in Jalrez District of central Maidan Wardak. The incident galvanized the public and sparked sensational protests. Reports say that Afghan Senators shut the House of Parliament in protest against what they called government's negligence to the Jalrez carnage, expressing strong criticism against security officials. Meanwhile, the lawmakers, in the Lower House, accused the interior minister and provincial security officials in Maidan Wardak of neglecting the killings.

According to reports, the policemen – who belonged to a particular ethnic minority – were not aided militarily by the security officials despite their persistent call and being besieged by the Taliban militants. Rumors say that the incident was a systematic plot against the ethnic minority group however the main reason behind the officials' negligence remains in mystery.

Constitutionally, Afghan citizens are free to exercise their rights under the democratic state irrespective of their race, sex, color, etc. and the government is responsible to provide them with equal rights and opportunities. As it is stated in the Constitution of Afghanistan, the government commits itself to "establish an order based on the peoples' will and democracy; form a civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination as well as violence, based on rule of law, social justice, protecting integrity and human rights, and attaining peoples' freedoms and fundamental rights; strengthen political, social, economic as well as defense institutions; attain a prosperous life and sound living environment for all inhabitants of this land..."

Historically, ethnocentrism was a highly deadly phenomenon which plagued Afghanistan and propelled her to violence and civil unrest – this paved the way for the Taliban's influence. The Taliban's ethnocentric ideology ravaged the country more than ever before. They massacred hundreds of thousands of ethnic minorities on the basis of their race, color and beliefs. To put it succinctly, the individuals' megalomania and superiority led to great causalities in Afghanistan and the history must not be permitted to repeat itself anymore.

The chronic problems of our bleeding nation have not been assuaged despite establishing a democratic government. A "civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination" is likely to be a dream that never comes true – as if our nation is doomed to suffer the dystopia of war and violence for the whole life.

The anguished parents shedding bitter tears in the funeral of their beloved sons – who lost their lives in terrorist acts, the forgotten widows begging on the streets after missing their spouses in the battle against

terrorists, the orphaned children, deprived of going to school, wander the slums for getting a morsel of bread, etc. make the headlines on national and international newspapers. The only reason behind all these tragedies is none but the Taliban militants.

The Taliban have been at war with the US-led coalition forces and the Afghan government for so long that there are few in Afghan politics who have no had personal experience of the violence. To make the point that the Taliban are still at war, a few days later the group claimed responsibility for an attack in Kabul. Moreover, the Jalrez deadly incident reflects the Taliban's inflexibility in peace.

In spite of all the aforementioned tragedies, Afghan government persists to bring the Taliban on the table of negotiation via Islamabad. Reports say that a delegation of Afghan leaders have traveled to Islamabad in order to commence peace talks with the Taliban. This comes as more than a decade of struggles for holding peace talks with the Taliban delegates met complete fiasco and none gave the desired fruit. In other words, despite the peace platitudes, Afghan nation has been the sacrificial lambs during the past decade. On the one hand, Taliban give Afghan officials the green light for peace parley but on the other hand they compound their terrorist acts. The officials have ignored this paradox and they fall for the militants' bogus claims continuously. Political analysts have also voiced their doubts about the potential outcome of such talks, so long as Pakistan has a hand in them. A Kabul university lecturer Nasrullah Stanikzai said, "I am not optimistic about the results of the talks". Abdul Waheed Wafa, a political analyst based out of Kabul University, said, "The Afghan government faces a huge challenge. There is mistrust in the region between Kabul and Islamabad and the Taliban so there is a lot of work to be done. Most crucially we need to understand what the Taliban want."

Figuring out what the Taliban wants poses a huge challenge to all parties. There are those who feel the Taliban are playing for time. They know that the Americans are leaving and therefore are looking for a way to leave quickly with having to re-engage as they have done in Iraq. For the Taliban, it's likely that they will want a constitutional amendment that institutes Islamic law.

A second problem is the Pakistani Taliban, who present a significant challenge to Islamabad and that's driving some of the mistrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

According to media reports at the time, it took nearly three years of on-and-off secret talks to get both sides to a position where talks might be possible. When it comes to this kind of diplomacy it's very hard to tell fact from fiction. What we do know is that in the last 12 months, talks have taken place in China, Qatar, Oslo, Dubai and Pakistan – but the violence and terrorist acts continue unabated in the country.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com

Envisioning Welfare State

By Asmatyari

The decades of ongoing conflict ended up with democracy – thought out to follow consolidated remedies to some hard born wounds of the socio-economically disgruntled masses. Bunch of goodliness were associated with confident aversion of fates of desperate, poverty-stricken and war ruined people. The sole purpose of democratic state is to look after the welfare of its masses. Nonetheless, travelling decades of journey past the establishment of democracy, the livelihood of masses could not alter to magnitude it should have. It is time go through the footsteps of history and find out the dos and don'ts that hindered progression Afghans.

At present state nations pursue their goals to collective progress, social wellbeing and safeguards from possible incursion. The consolidation of a state primarily pivots on the former requisites than latter, provided the universal notion of peaceful coexistence is not overrun. The role of nation states thereby is confined to provision of social services than keeping large standing army. Conversely, the nascent Islamic democratic state Afghanistan is distant yet to embrace the modern democratic norms of rule of law, pluralism, segregation of state and religion and civil liberties. A society at the behest of irrational discourse and traditional laws is bound to suffer and wander till the onset of pertinent cognition of introducing social reforms.

Social reform are often gradual but understated changes to particular characteristics of society, although when a social reform does not work, a radical, aggressive social reform may take place. However, it seeks to reform policies regarding women's rights, child labor, civil rights, education systems, judicial system, institutional discretionary power, health services, housing schemes and universal suffrage.

Women constituting half of the population are rendered dysfunctional, put on the brunt of socio-religious charges – a tactic that not only underestimate their mental and physical soundness but also coerce them at the bank of societal undertakings. This is an absolute inequitable conduct and deliberate negation of societal building capacity, they are gifted with. A woman despite numerous discriminations dare making public appearances, serving state institutions are rendered vulnerable to harassment, offensive charges and even physical abuse from both state owned officials and non-state actors. Another, predicament running across our social consciences unfelt is growing child labor. The rule of land either is silent at the subject or owes subtly implemented provisions, shelved to add into the look of constitutional edifice.

Notwithstanding, the children subjected endless afflictions and exploitation ranging from physical, mental abuses and tortures fails to earn the attention of guardian of law. Previously the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSMD) reported that human struggles transfer Afghan children abroad through illegal means and many of these children are abused by the mafia and smugglers on the routs toward the foreign countries. Eliminating child labor is one of the biggest challenges for the current government that needs immediate attention. Child labor not only causes

damage to a child's physical and mental health, but also keep him deprive of his basic rights to education, development and freedom. Keeping the gravity of problems in consideration the government of Afghanistan must take immediate steps for alleviating the child labor on war footing.

Institutional reforms to broaden Afghan political participation and punish corruption would be preferable, but institution building is fast slipping beyond reach. It may soon be necessary to settle for constraining favoritism at the margin by renegotiating today's political deals between Kabul and sub-national power brokers to exclude only the worst abuses. In particular, land taking by criminal patronage networks is uniquely destructive; with Western patience and resources dwindling, preventing official land grabs could soon be the limit of the achievable.

Following constitutional, electoral reform intends to open political participation and strengthen the parliament as a check on executive excesses. These are noble goals. But they are very ambitious, and will require more time and resources than the West now seems willing to commit. This is because formal institutions have the weaknesses of their strengths: if effective, they pose a permanent, uncontrollable threat to any official with corruption in the past or present. As such, they threaten a wide array of major figures; creating potent opposition that today's limited leverage will be hard-pressed to overcome.

Regrettably every elected leader depends on the network's leadership to deliver political support; in exchange, he empowers them with critical appointments, protects them from prosecution, and allows them to prey on the public. This is what we witnessed formerly, when cabinet members were to be picked for various slots, a great deal of favoritism and loyalty exercised to win the confidence. The result is a government of informal political deal making rather than rule-based administration by publicly accountable institutions.

In Afghanistan, land is often the difference between feeding one's family and destitution; the future of many families, tribes, and communities depends on their land holdings. Yet it is common for the powerful in Afghanistan to throw people off their land, often for economic development projects that serve chiefly as vehicles for fraudulent loans and financial schemes that benefit officials and their associates. According to a report published by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), some 9 million Afghans – 36 per cent of the population – are believed to live in absolute poverty and a further 37 per cent live only slightly above the poverty line, despite an estimated injection of billions of dollars in previous years. Only 23 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water, and only 24 per cent of Afghans above the age of 15 can read and write, with much lower literacy rates among women and nomadic populations.

It's concluded in the light of aforesaid details, an all-encompassing social reforms might subside the magnitude of problems if could not eradicate them. The provision of life necessities, social security safeguards, access to law, right to vote etc stands the primary responsibilities of the state. The government must design to improve its capacity to deliver services to its citizens –making the vision of welfare state come true.

Asmatyari is the permanent writer of Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at asmatyari@gmail.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.