

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



July 17, 2017

The Role of Youth in Afghanistan

For the last few decades Afghanistan has been going through a very difficult time. The country has been largely influenced by insecurity, and the incapacity of the leaders to guide the nation towards integration and prosperity has added fuel to the fire. The insecurity and instability have always hampered the initiatives for betterment and development. They have also influenced the human resource within the country and thus blocked the opportunities towards their capacity and character building.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that though different sorts of problems have dominated the Afghan society, the performance, vigor and the spirits of Afghan youth have never disappointed. Among difficulties and disappointments, it is encouraging to find many of them motivated towards education and positive life and hopefully if they are given the chance to reign over the important institutions, they will be able to bring about many positive changes.

Their recent role in media, modern education and information technology has convinced many that they have the potential to guarantee a prosperous future but there should be more efforts on the part of government for their improvement so that they are able to compete on the regional and international levels and become confident enough to stand on their own. It is always important that the youth should be motivated and appreciated for their achievement. Being emotional in their behavior, youngsters can be best guided through appreciation and gratitude. Appreciation has the capacity to unfold the potentials and divert them towards great achievements. Moreover, appreciation of the positive achievements can also initiate a positive competition among the youngsters and they strive to vie for those achievements instead of getting caught in negative competition and losing their way. Thus, positive competition will not only support them in developing their own potentials and skills but will also provide benefits to the society as a whole. Educated youngsters will be motivated if they find that their talents are being observed and being valued. The developed countries of the world have a great respect for the contribution of youth and the educational institutions, particularly the universities play a dominant role in their societies. Most of the youth are hired directly from the universities and they do not have to run after the jobs once they complete their education. The coordination between the educational institutions and public and private institutions are very strong and they fully understand one another's requirements; therefore, they prepare accordingly and do not have to face the issue of unemployment to a large extent. Currently, Afghanistan is producing many educated youth but it should also have mechanism wherein these youth are compensated in their own professions; otherwise, their education may be wasted.

Afghanistan has the opportunity of making maximum benefits from its youth as its 60 percent population is below the age of 25. Many of them have the tendency to bring about positive changes in the society as they seem tired of instability and war. However, there are many others who have been victimized by the ongoing conflicts and instability and do not see any hope to come out of the quagmire. However, Afghanistan has an opportunity to use such a large number of human resource for a better tomorrow.

Without the contribution of the youth in Afghanistan, it would be very difficult to see a healthy transition towards a democratic country and better economy as youth can have the real understanding for such a system and can work for it. They are being educated within a system that at least has some sort of structure and function, while the old generation did not have such an opportunity as they were going through civil wars and chaotic instability.

However, without a comprehensive strategy it would be really difficult for Afghanistan to make any achievement regarding the development and the improvement of the youth and their roles within the society. Afghan authorities need to design comprehensive policies in this regard and also design the ways to achieve them. Promises alone and separated actions would not bear any fruit and the youth would remain in the situation that is not favorable for their growth and capacity enhancement.

Afghanistan has to prepare itself for providing higher education based on modern techniques and methodologies, better exposure opportunities, and ultimately job opportunities to this large number of people, which is the only way to make them play positive role.

Every year a large number of youngsters complete their education and strive to find employment so that they are able to earn a livelihood and at the same time support their families and country. Some of them even turn to social evils and particularly they are recruited by the terrorists as they are not able to find proper job opportunities elsewhere. Therefore, they should be provided chances so that they are able to play a positive role in the society instead of becoming a burden or part of problem.



Taliban's School of Thought

By Hujjatullah Zia

The Taliban's radical mindsets and cruel practices in Afghanistan reflected their ideology. The Taliban group ruled Afghanistan from September 1996 until December 2001, with Kandahar as the capital, under the term of Islamic Emirate. While in power, it enforced its strict interpretation of Sharia law. While many leading Muslims and Islamic scholars have been highly critical of the Taliban's interpretations of Islamic law, the Darul Uloom Deoband has consistently supported the Taliban in Afghanistan, including their 2001 destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan. The majority of the Taliban's leaders were influenced by Deobandi fundamentalism, Pashtunwali (Pashtun tribal code) also played a significant role in the Taliban's legislation.

The Deobandi movement first developed as a reaction to the British colonialism which was seen by a group of Indian scholars – consisting of Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Muhammad Yaqub Nanautawi, etc. Towards the time of Indian independence, the Deobandis advocated a notion of composite nationalism by which Hindus and Muslims were seen as one nation who were asked to be united in the struggle against the British. In 1919, a large group of Deobandi scholars formed the political party Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind and opposed the Pakistan Movement. A minority group joined Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Muslim League, forming the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam in 1945, which had a strong influence on Taliban's legal system.

Moreover, the Taliban were influenced by another radical school of thought called "Salafi". Historians and academics date the emergence of Salafism to late 19th-century Egypt. Salafis believe that the label "Salafiyah" existed from the first few generations of Islam and that it is not a modern movement. To justify this view, Salafis rely on a handful of quotes from medieval times where the term Salafi is used.

Influenced by Saudi Arabia, the Taliban Emirate believed that the Holy Koran and Sunnah would cover all social, cultural, economic and political aspects and there was no need for approving a man-made constitution. Hence, the Kandahar High Council and Kabul Council would resolve the issues under the title of "Islamic Sharia Law" and under the fatwa of Taliban's founder Mullah Mohammad Omar – who passed away in Pakistan in 2013.

Regarding the Taliban's jurisprudence, Darul-Fatwa-e-Markazi (central department of religious decree) was established in Kandahar province which was run by Taliban's clergy who studied in Deoband and Haqqani seminaries

in Pakistan. A large number of the Taliban are believed to lack the basic knowledge not only about religion but about people and society. The ministry of "Amr-i-ba-Maaruf and Nahi-az-Monker" (order to virtue and stop from evil) was one of highly strict institution in the "Taliban's Islamic Emirate". One of Taliban, member of this department, reveals a fact about his man's act in a private meeting. According to him, one day as the Taliban blocked a road close to a mosque to force the passersby to attend the mosque for prayer. One of the Taliban's members stopped a Sikh and asked him to attend the prayer.

He replied that he was Sikh. Then, the Talib replies that either you are Sikh or whatever, but you are Muslim and have to go to mosque! Thus, they lacked the very basic knowledge about people and society. By and large, it is hard to claim that the Taliban practiced upon a certain school of thought. To ponder over their code of conduct, the Taliban's attitude and mindsets rooted in many radical schools of thought, including Salafi, Deobandism, Muslims Brotherhood Party, Wahhabis, etc.

The Taliban's attitude towards women also originated from Salafism and superficial and radical interpretations of Islamic tenets. They denied women's fundamental rights, including the right to education, and curtailed their freedom to a great extent. They claimed that bestowing freedom to women will pave the ground for moral corruption and prostitution. During their regime, women were not allowed to get out of home or go to bazaar without male chaperone.

Therefore, they blocked female public bathrooms, beauty parlors and ordered tailors not to measure women's bodies in case of making clothes from them. Putting nail polish, taking photo, listening to music, playing guitar, clapping, etc. were deemed against the Taliban's rule.

To sum up, the Taliban chanted the slogan of referring to the past – to 14 centuries back – and follow the practices of Islamic Caliphs but their understanding of those practices were very basic and radical.

Taliban did not have a certain school of thought and were influenced by many fundamental schools. They sought to impose their warped minds on people at gunpoint. Their radical interpretation of Islamic tenets and cruel acts were never ever acceptable for Afghan nation or the world. But who dared breathe a word against their regime? Opposing their regime was considered deviation from "the right path" and followed by harsh punishment or death.

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Calls for Stripping Qatar of World Cup Suggests Gulf Crisis at a Stalemate

By James M. Dorsey

A Saudi-UAE-led alliance has tabled a long-expected demand that world soccer body FIFA strip Qatar of its 2022 World Cup hosting rights.

With little chance of FIFA acting on the demand any time soon, the move suggests that the alliance, struggling to figure a way forward amid mounting international pressure for a face-saving way out of the six-week-old Gulf crisis, needs to be seen to be acting on its hitherto unfulfilled promise to tighten the screws on Qatar.

Amid mounting international pressure for a negotiated solution to the crisis and calls for the lifting of the alliance's diplomatic and economic boycott of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and its allies have so far shied away from promises to tighten the noose around Qatar's neck if it failed to cave in to their demands centred on accusations of Qatari funding of terrorism.

Six weeks into the boycott, Qatar has been able to absorb the boycott, which involves a cut-off of almost all land, sea and air links with the Gulf state. It also has succeeded in standing its ground in a struggle for the moral high ground with its detractors, whose demands have failed to garner a groundswell of international support.

While few in the international community give Qatar a clean bill of health on funding of militancy and political violence, many suggest that its detractors are tainted by the same brush. The alliance has moreover struggled to come up with a set of demands that many in the international community have said need to be reasonable and actionable.

The Saudi-UAE-led alliance initially put forward a set of 13 non-negotiable demands that included cutting ties to a host of Islamist and militant groups and individuals, closing a Turkish military base in Qatar, lowering its relations with Iran, shuttering Qatar-sponsored media such as the controversial Al Jazeera television network, and putting Qatar under guardianship. Qatar's rejection of the demands and the alliance's realization that its quest was being perceived by many in the international community as an attempt to undermine Qatari sovereignty and curb freedom of the media, prompted the alliance to adopt six principles that repackaged the demands and removed some of the sharp edges.

Much like the original demands, those principles also failed to garner the kind of international support the alliance needs to push forward with a tightening of the screws on Qatar.

The alliance also appears to have backed down on at least one of its demands, the shuttering of Al Jazeera. In an interview with The Times, UAE minister for the federal national council Noura al-Kaabi said the Emirates sought "fundamental change and restructuring" rather than closure of Al Jazeera. The Saudi-UAE-led alliance accuses the network of being a platform for militant groups.

"We need a diplomatic solution. We are not looking for an escalation," Ms. Al-Kaabi said, suggesting that the Saudi-UAE led alliance was looking for a face-saving end to a crisis in which parties have dug in their heels, reducing margins for a way out that would allow all to declare victory.

At the heart of the Gulf crisis, lies a fundamental divide in how

Qatar and its main detractors, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, envision the future of the Middle East and North Africa. Central to the dispute is the international community's inability to define what constitutes terrorism and who is a terrorist.

It is a difference that is likely to weaken the demand to deprive Qatar of its World Cup hosting rights. It is also a difference that has given the Gulf crisis a pot-blaming-the-kettle character.

While Qatar sees the survival of its autocratic regime in the support of political change everywhere but at home in a naïve belief that it can exempt itself, Saudi Arabia and the UAE opted for maintenance of the status quo ante by rolling back the achievements of the 2011 popular Arab revolts that toppled the leaders of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. A sub-text to the struggle is the existential battle between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The epic struggle has led to a military coup in Egypt that removed from office the country's first and only democratically elected president, sparked devastating civil wars in Libya and Syria, aggravated conflict in Iraq, and prompted an ill-fated Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen that brought the country to the edge of the abyss.

With efforts to mediate a way out of the crisis in full swing, FIFA has little incentive to act on a letter by six of its members – Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen and Mauritania – demanding that Qatar be deprived of its hosting rights because it is a "base of terrorism."

Speaking to a European news website, The Local, FIFA president Gianni Infantino said that "the countries warned FIFA of the risks threatening fan and player security in a country that is 'the base and the castle of terrorism'."

Mr. Infantino said the six countries had threatened to boycott the tournament should their request not be acted upon.

While the six countries are unlikely to be under the illusion that FIFA will simply accept their demand, tabling it allows the Saudi-UAE-led alliance to assert that it is not backing down in the Gulf crisis and is increasing pressure on Qatar. The alliance also hopes to exploit widespread criticism within the global soccer community of FIFA's 2010 decision to award Qatar hosting rights.

Nevertheless, FIFA is unlikely to want to take sides in the crisis or weigh in on the debate on definitions of terrorism. Struggling to shake off multiple scandals that have severely tarnished the world soccer body's image, FIFA is also unlikely to take a decision in a dispute in which all parties are tainted. Moreover, FIFA is under no real pressure to act. The Qatar World Cup is more than five years away. The Gulf crisis is certain to be resolved long before that, one way or the other. In the meantime, the boycott does not stop Qatar from moving ahead with construction of World Cup-related infrastructure, albeit at a higher cost of construction materials.

Ultimately, FIFA will want to take a decision on the merits of Qatar's ability to deliver a safe, secure and well managed World Cup rather than based on political arguments, many of which have yet to be substantiated.

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