

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

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Kabul Bleeds Again

A blast near Dahburi, in PD-3, Kabul, took the lives of 36 civilians and injured more than 40 others. The blast took place around 6:45 am, and it reportedly targeted a bus carrying employees of the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum. Some reporters also claimed that the suicide bomber wanted to target Mohammad Mohaqiq, second deputy for CEO Abdullah Abdullah, whose house is near to the site where the bombing was carried out. However, there are no clear reports about who was the main target of the bombing.

The blast is another addition in the series of bombings that have been taking place in the capital, Kabul, in the last few months. It is the largest attack in Kabul, after the notorious truck bombing near Zanaq Square that took the lives of more than 100 people and injured more than 400 others, and the tragedies that followed the incident. And, only few weeks earlier, another bombing had been carried out within few kilometers from Monday's bombing site. That attack had targeted the Al-Zahra Mosque, situated in Dasht-e-Barchi and resulted in the death of 10 people including the famous businessman, Ramzan Hussainzada.

It is imperative to comprehend that the nature of terrorism and insurgency is now turning into a complex and complicated phenomenon in Afghanistan. The security situation is deteriorating again and the prospects of peace and tranquility are not very clear. Earlier, it was only Taliban who posed a serious threat to the country but now Afghanistan is facing Daesh as well, which seems to be getting stronger with each passing day. Previously, there were claims that the growth of Daesh in Afghanistan will be controlled but the situation now clearly depicts that the claims were not far away from reality. The growth of Daesh has mounted double challenge for Afghan government and the security forces. There are already doubts and questions about the performance of Afghan security forces against the growing threats of Taliban in different parts of the country, the rise of Daesh has put their capabilities in further test. Daesh has had a history of ruthless massacre and tyranny in Middle East and it largely differs from Taliban the way its militants operate. There have already been certain incidents wherein they have shown inhumane tyranny against innocent civilians and some security forces.

Daesh is believed to be in highly offensive in different parts of the country. According to many reports, the group is operating in different parts of Badkshshan, Kunduz, Farah, Faryab, Logar and also in the eastern regions, especially in Nangarhar. Daesh has shown its true face in Iraq and Syria and has shown to the world the extent of its barbarism. The group needs to be observed properly in Afghanistan; otherwise, it would be really difficult to control it in insecure circumstances. Another major factor that is supporting the growth of Daesh is that many ex-Taliban militants have joined it, and they are now fighting under its flag. Moreover, the weak security mechanism to have a check on its growth has further deteriorated the situation. It is really unfortunate for Afghanistan that even after so many sacrifices that are given by the country, the prospects of peace and tranquility are not very optimistic. The insecurity seems to be on the rise in different parts of the country and the response of the relevant authorities are not truly effective. It seems the authorities do not have any clear idea about how to tackle the situation and help the country go through this crucial period with triumph, and now the people are being distracted as well, which is making the task even more challenging.

On the other hand, Taliban and Daesh have spread their networks in different provinces and everyday show their presence in some way or the other. Sometimes they target the innocent civilians and at others they target the security personnel. Afghan security forces, on most of the occasions, take actions only after such incidents and calm down the situation temporarily. When the situation seems to be normalized, the insurgents again move forward and make their attacks. In fact, the security forces do not seem to have a proactive approach, which may be because of lack of any clear strategy in the top rankings of the government officials, who, themselves, are involved in their own differences instead of standing united to counter the growing threats of Taliban and Daesh.

If the authorities do not get really serious and determined to solve the security issues, it may start haunting Afghanistan to a great extent and may even undo the achievements that have been acquired in the last 15 years or so. The insurgents will keep on carrying out their activities and terrorize the people of Afghanistan like they are doing now. The current situation clearly highlights the fact that the insurgents are not even inclined towards peace process. However, before any hopes of acquiring peace and tranquility can be turned into reality, the security forces and government authorities must make sure that they fulfill their responsibilities with determination and untiring efforts. Definitely, Afghan people have given many sacrifices and after so many sacrifices, it is important that Afghanistan should see a future full of peace and tranquility; however, for that to happen it is imperative that Afghan leadership must prove itself capable of designing and following a workable strategy to counter terrorism.



The Challenges Hampering Counterinsurgency

By Hujjatullah Zia

Afghanistan is not only embroiled in instability, but there are many issues challenging the National Unity Government (NUG). The continual terrorist attacks and suicide bombings, despite the downfall of the Taliban's regime, are rife across the country and hardly ever outrage the collective conscience. The graph of civilian casualties is mounting with each passing day. The Taliban kill innocent civilians, Afghans count their fatalities, and the government condemns the attacks in the strongest possible way - this is the daily game in Afghanistan.

Bemoaning the victims and praying for peace and stability in the same breath have been changed into habitual action for parents in Afghanistan. Warring factions kill men, women and children without an iota of mercy, and we bury the dead bodies with a strong sense of fear and hatred, this action repeats next day.

However, the Taliban insurgents, who resort to suicide attacks with the dream of setting foot in paradise and embracing heavenly ladies with indescribable carnal desire - as they have been inculcated so - lack basic knowledge about their victims. They are kept in dark by the real game players. Poor attackers, who risk both their lives and hereafter with an illusion and mirage. Curse on those game players and corrupt figures who feel no tinge of guilt. In addition to the endless game of life and death continuing unabated in Afghanistan, there are many challenges which hamper the government from combating this issue.

One of the major obstacles before combating terrorism is the mistrust and political tension within the government apparatus. For instance, the recent formation of coalitions and political parties by high-ranking officials unfold a division between officials splintered into two parties.

The third issue is administrative corruption within the government machinery. A number of officials, except for some, are deeply involved in corruption and their only claim to fame is to earn property from any possible way - whether or not it risk their faith or humanity. No wonder, corruption is a highly detrimental to social, political and economic issues. For example, when a murderer is released or when a person perpetrates a crime with impunity for having power or money, security will remain elusive in that society.

Since Afghanistan is on the top list of corrupt countries, the security situation will remain fragile. The fourth challenging issue is that despite escalated terrorism which blackmails the entire globe, the world is lacking

the spirit of brotherhood to bond them stronger. After all, a number of countries hold hostile relationships and remain political opponents. When the world is void of a sense of friendship and bonded with one another only on the basis of self-interests, the effective role of international community will come under question. In other words, being interest-orientated, the world will hardly take actions against insecurity in other countries unless their own security is exposed to direct threat. To put it succinctly, the sense of friendship and philanthropy is more likely to subside that will be a strong blow to the countries vulnerable to terrorism and militancy.

The Taliban's relentless stance in spilling the blood of combatants and non-combatants and their persistent refusal to Afghanistan's call for peace change the war into an interminable game. The Taliban elements are believed to be formed of ideologues and mercenaries and both hold out against peace or peace talks for their own reasons. The ideologues nurture highly radical mindsets and their thirst for paradise, according to their own beliefs, will be quenched only and only by death. They seek to pursue their false dream through killing people and the only solution to stop them is nothing other than shooting them on the head. The mercenary fighters intend to satiate their hunger and alleviate their economic constraints through pocketing money. Strengthening economic development and alleviating poverty will reduce their tendency towards joining militant fighters.

To mitigate insurgency, the government should not necessarily focus on fighting, but also consider the social, political and economic grounds for insurgency and the motive behind it. That is to say, militancy will continue if the root causes remain unaddressed.

In addition to combating insurgency, a reformation should be brought within the government apparatus, too. All the mentioned challenges are needed to be tackled without further delay. In such a critical time, Afghan officials will have to bury their differences and stand as an iron fist against warring factions, mainly the Taliban who murder our people indiscriminately. To sum up, only killing the Taliban physically will not resolve the challenges but their warped mind and radical ideology must be rooted out.

Afghan government and its allies, along with international community, will have to target the hotbed of radicalism and eradicate the social, political and economic grounds for radicalization.

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No Words to Articulate my Anguish

By Sakhi Danish

Are you really able to fight back your tears while seeing hot drops of blood oozing from the wounds of a terrorist victim? What about the bodies riddled with Kalashnikov or throats sliced with knives? Have you ever missed a sweetheart? These are the stories of our life. One says goodbye to his/her family to commute to work and is killed on the spot without a sense of guilt. This sudden and tragic death of your friend or family member will shock you to the bone and numb your senses.

The picture of terrorist victims who look like bloody statues lying in debris and wreckage after suicide bombings triggers an outpouring of grief. The nauseous odor of human flesh burnt in the explosion will fill you with mercy towards victims and hatred towards the perpetrators - a strong hatred that you might curse being born such a cruel animal. Your heart will melt with the groaning of the injured touching your ears, the voices shouting for mercy, and mothers' tears being shed beside the bloody corpses of their children.

When a car bomb targeted a bus carrying ministry staff in Kabul on Monday, many young people were murdered and took all their wishes to the grave with them. This gory incident pained Afghan nation severely but the picture of a young girl went viral in social media. Najiba Hussaini, who studied her BA in India and MA in Japan, was among the victims.

Najiba was from Daikundi province - a mountainous province lacking very basic facilities. No doubt, it must have been her high ambitions and tireless efforts which paved the ground for her to study abroad since there are still many obstacles for women to get education.

However, she also took her wishes and desires to the grave with her. In her picture, circulated in social media, Najiba is dressed in white scarf and black outfit, wearing a pair of black glasses and holding a red file - which is more likely her graduation certificate - with a smile on her lip. Her eyes are gleaming with hope. But which hope? This remains a mystery.

Is there anything to hold out hope for in this war-torn country? Since the air is filled with fear and chagrin, it seems that the last gleam of hope is disappearing.

Such poignant stories repeat every once in a while in Afghanistan and people lose their lives tragically, some leave their families without bread-winner. The most tragic aspect of these bloody incidents is that they are

faded into oblivion with words of condemnation and might change into normal part of life. What will remain a value for a society when killing mankind changes into normal practice or at least one is not moved by such heart-wrenching pictures?

Last year in the same day, 86 people were killed and about 400 were wounded in a suicide attack in a peaceful demonstration led by "Enlightenment Movement". Many of the victims were young and educated individuals.

Indeed, such painful tragedies are beyond one's tolerance. But despite the fact that Afghan men and women are raising their voice against such acts of violence, there is still no panacea for their bleeding wound.

It goes without saying that the lump in the throat of victims' families is left unsaid. The tearful orphans and anguished widows have their own stories. They are the forgotten parts of our society despite suffering from backbreaking pain. Besides lacking a morsel of food, they have no shoulder to cry on. Their agony and screams fall on deaf ears, the issue which is rife in Afghanistan.

Afghans have been changed into sacrificial lamb in this protracted war. Life is extremely cheap as men and women are murdered in cold blood. Tragedies are repeated time and again and more harshly than ever before. Considering the deadly issues, one will believe it firmly that "man is man's wolf" butchering each other out of their selfishness and megalomania. To be honest, words cannot articulate my anguish.

Martin Luther King has aptly said, "Yet, in spite of these spectacular strides in science and technology, and still unlimited ones to come, something basic is missing. There is a sort of poverty of the spirit which stands in glaring contrast to our scientific and technological abundance.

The richer we have become materially, the poorer we have become morally and spiritually. We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers."

We need to extend our tolerance and revive our humanity and moral senses. We are members of human families and have to learn the art of living a peaceful life with one another.

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