

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



June 14, 2018

Root Causes of Conflict in Afghanistan

According to the recent studies eight out of 10 of the world's poorest countries are suffering, or have recently suffered, from large scale violent conflict. Wars in these countries have heavy human, economic, political and social costs and are a major cause of poverty and underdevelopment. Afghanistan as a developing country is no exception and it is faced with the same challenges.

The Cultural Dimension of War

Many groups of people who fight together in the country assume themselves as belonging to a common culture (ethnic or religious), and part of the reason that they are fighting is to be able to maintain their cultural autonomy. Some may hold that for this reason; there is a tendency to attribute wars to "primordial" ethnic passions, which make them seem intractable. However, this view is not correct, because it diverts our attention from the underlying economic and political factors contributing to conflict in the country. Indeed a person's culture is partly inherited. It is also constructed and chosen. Further, in wars, as we have repeated experienced, political leaders deliberately "rework historical memories" to engender or strengthen this identity in the competition for power and resources. For example the emphasis on Muslim consciousness by the Taliban and others.

Economic Factors which predispose to war

There are different perspectives about explaining intra-state wars, based on factors related to group motivation, private motivation, failure of the social contract, and environmental degradation. However, the failure of social contract may be the most relevant one in the context of Afghanistan. Based on this perspective, since intra-state wars mainly consist of fighting between groups, group motives, resentments, and ambitions provide motivation for war. These groups may be divided along cultural or religious lines, by geography, or by class. As such, we have experience all these forms in our country and have been paying their expensive costs for more than four decades in our country. What has changed the potentials of group difference worth fighting for, however, is that, there are other important differences between groups, particularly in the distribution and exercise of political and economic power in Afghanistan. It has led the relatively deprived groups to redress. And since political redress either has not been possible or there have not been enough political will to political redress in the Afghan government, they have resorted to war in the past, exits currently in the country and it is likely to happen in the future.

Although this hypotheses may not be able to solely explain all conflicts in Afghanistan, it does identify factors likely to predispose groups to conflict. It is clear as crystal that some explanations hold in some situations and not in others, but one factor that different studies have found to be important is a history of conflict. According to the findings of ethnic group conflicts in Afghanistan, this is because the same structural factors that predisposed to war initially often continue, and because mobilizing people by calling on group memories is more effective if there is a history of conflict.

Policies to reduce the likelihood of war

Different research conducted in the developing countries, including Afghanistan, suggest some important policy conclusions for conflict-prone countries. Policies to tackle poverty and environmental degradation would decrease the likelihood of war, as well as being critical development objectives. Decreasing large horizontal inequalities is essential to eradicate a major source of conflict. Policies that eliminate private incentives to fight, especially once conflict is under way, are also needed to be put in place and well implemented. Above all, there is a requirement to secure inclusive government—from political, economic, and social perspectives—and an affluent economy so that all major groups and most individuals gain from participation in the normal economy. It is an issue that neither in the past nor during the presence of the international community from 2001 to the present has been ensured in Afghanistan.

From a political perspective, inclusive government is not simply a matter of democracy; majority based democracy can lead to oppression of minorities as it is again the case for Afghanistan. Conflict is greatest in semi-democracies or governments in transition and least among established democracies and authoritarian regimes. One of the critical issues that shall be considered in the context of Afghanistan is that democratic institutions must be inclusive at all levels—for example, voting systems should ensure that all major groups are represented in government.

In addition, economic and social policies are needed to systematically reduce horizontal inequalities. Policies towards investment, employment, education, and other social services should aim at reducing imbalances and inequalities. If we conduct a simple assessment of such policies in Afghanistan, we would conclude that such policies have not contributed much to realize these objectives in Afghanistan. Although Afghanistan has developed very good policies in these areas but they have failed to ensure these objectives due to short sighted and imbalanced implementation. Further, such policies need to be introduced cautiously since action to correct horizontal inequalities has occasionally provoked conflict by the group whose privileged position is being weakened, but at the same time there is no other option to put an end to the conflict in the country. It requires a strong political will and at the same time needs honest and committed politicians to consider the prosperity of the nation supreme to the prosperity of their ethnic group prosperity.

If Afghan government is determined to put an end to the conflict in the country it shall consider short term and long term policies. The short term policies of the government should aim to change private incentives to fight include providing employment schemes and credit to young men. And the long term policies of the government should aim extending education and achieving inclusive development to enhance peace time opportunities for all Afghan citizens.

Cycle of Violence Are Against Peace Voice and Islamic Fatwa

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Unfortunately, the voice of peace is always responded by increasing series of violence in Afghanistan. In few last days, contrary to the morality of ceasefires and recent Islamic fatwa, multiple attacks carried out throughout the country. The recent ceasefire between the Afghan government and the Taliban had created some hopes among the people that the move might pave the way for peace talks but reversely several tragedies happened in different parts of the country. As the Eid days are closing the terror attacks are increasing in major Afghan cities. Yesterday, a suicide bomber has killed 13 people and wounded more than 25 others in a rush hour attack outside a government building in Kabul. Islamic State quickly claimed responsibility for the attacks in Kabul but security officials think it is much more likely to be the work of the Haqqani network, a group affiliated with the Taliban. The attack comes as security has deteriorated in recent months ahead of elections scheduled for October. Over all the last attacks took the lives of at least 28 people and over 40 injured in three separate attacks in Kunduz, Nangarhar, and in Kabul provinces city on Monday. The attack in the Qala-i-Zal district of northern Kunduz province claimed the lives of some 15 Afghan security personnel, as Pajhwok reported. It was reportedly carried out by the Taliban, despite the militants earlier announced a ceasefire. A separate blast that rocked a fair in the Chaparhar district of eastern Nangarhar province left at least 14 injured, according to Public Health Director Najibullah Kamawal, as quoted by Pajhwok.

However, the Ministry of Defense (MoD), as usual, stresses on its successes and achievements. Only, in few last days, they claimed that they had conducted joint operations against insurgents in different areas of Nangarhar, Ghazni, Urzgan, Zabul, Badghis, Farah, Faryab, Baghlan, Takhar and Helmand provinces, in which 34 insurgents were killed and nine others wounded. During these operations, 13 Daesh fighters killed, one wounded and three others arrested in Chaparhar district of Nangarhar, some ammunition and weapons belonged to the enemy seized by the Afghan security forces in the district-13 insurgents killed and three others wounded in Andar, Zankhan districts and center of Ghazni province—four militants killed and three others wounded in Dehrawod district of Urzgan, while two other rebels killed in Marja district of Helmand province.

The cycle of violence is intensified when Afghan people started to raise their voice for peace and end of in the country. In addition to recent Ulema gathering, a group peace marcher who initially marched in Helmand, walked to Ghazni and Kabul denouncing war and wants end of U.S. occupation. Upon arriving in Ghazni, they were welcomed with bunches of flowers and warm appreciation. Thousands of people came out and the religious scholars said in public that this is the voice of justice and the ongoing war in the country should stop. "We have four demands" that will be present-

ed to Afghan leaders, quoted Bacha Khan Mawladad, a member of the peace convoy. "First, the warring parties should announce a ceasefire during Ramadan; second, specify an address (for peace talks), third, establish a joint government, fourth, sit together and fix a date for the withdrawal of 'foreigners' from Afghanistan."

Helmand peace walk and Ulema collective fatwa were very unusual move in the country and these shows the highest culmination of war weariness in the country. It is hoped that government and its allies may hear the voice of people who are the victims of imposed war. Otherwise, people may become compelled to use unpleasant methods for expressing their voice for peace and freedom in the country.

The latest act of violence and killing of innocent people are not only in paradox to the morality of peace and ceasefire but also breaches the Islamic fatwa. The ongoing war which was justified as a holy war recently outlawed by 2,000 Afghan religious scholars gathered in Kabul. In addition, earlier over 72 religious scholars from three Islamic countries had issued a declaration on the war and peace in Afghanistan, in which they promulgated their opposition against the terrorism and violent extremism and had declared their support for any peace offer, efforts and declarations in ending war and bringing peace in Afghanistan. They unanimously stressed in their statements that "war in its all types is forbidden under the Islamic law and it is nothing except shedding the blood of Muslims whereas the real victims are innocent Afghan men, women, and children.

If Taliban are really Afghan and Muslim, they should reconsider the voice of their people and the Islamic fatwa and rethink about country's interests and oneness. Otherwise these conflicts will produce no winner except farther destruction of the country. The conflict has already taken a lot of lives, regardless of whether it is a soldier, a civilian or even the Taliban fighters who are from Afghanistan.

Thus, the government and international partners also should note that Afghan people want peace and security and they are really stupefied for who are responsible for these many casualties? And who is responsible for increasing number of addictions, hunger and corruption? And what is the benefit of foreigners' presence in our country while every day the tragedies are repeated? As the armed conflicts in Afghanistan are watered by various social and political motives, they all must be thoroughly analyzed and taken to consideration or else peace is not possible. In fact, peace program neither could be confined to mere negotiations nor limited to battle field but it should be combined of both with firm will for producing results and essential changes.

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

Mahathir - what next?

By Imran Khalid

Last few weeks have seen some extremely abrupt and dramatic changes in the political arena of Malaysia. The electoral victory of Mahathir Mohamad, release of victorious opposition alliance's icon, Anwar Ibrahim, from the jail and the start of massive investigations into the corruption scandal of former Premier Najib Razak have literally put the already volatile Malaysian politics into new phase of swift twists and turns. Indubitably, there is a glamorous touch to the phenomenal election triumph of 92-year-old Mahathir Mohamad, which is being eulogized as an extraordinary victory of people power over corruption in Malaysia. But the bitter fact is that the situation is not as perky and cheerful as being projected by Mahathir-Anwar alliance and their associates. It is certainly a stunning comeback. Mahathir, previously Prime Minister between 1981 and 2003, has returned back as the head of an opposition coalition with a big bang and defeated his former protege Najib Razak and effectively put a full stop to six decades of one-party rule in the country. The unlikely alliance of Mahathir and Anwar has been one of the many unusual aspects of this election. When Mahathir was prime minister the first time round, Anwar was his protege and deputy, tipped for the top job until Mahathir thought he was growing out of his boots and becoming too powerful. After a prosecution for corruption and sodomy that was widely perceived to be politically motivated and fabricated, he was jailed in 1999. But this year, in the bid to get rid of Najib Razak, who is accused over a \$3.2bn corruption scandal, Mahathir joined the opposition and agreed to run as its leader, get a royal pardon for Anwar (who was again behind bars since 2013 on a second charge of sodomy) and then make way for him to become prime minister in next one to two years.

Mahathir Mohamad is generally labelled, and rightly so, as the main architect of new and modern Malaysia. He spearheaded the transition of Malaysia from an under developed country to a developing nation that became regional leader in a short time. During his tenure of more than two decades, Malaysia saw drastic growth in infrastructure and economy and became a role model for its neighbouring countries in the Southeast Asia. He galvanized rapid economic development and transformed the country's economy from agriculturally based to a more industrialised one. He created a sense of civic and national pride through mega projects such as national car Proton, the Sepang Formula One circuit and, of course, the Petronas Twin Towers, still among the tallest twin skyscrapers in the world. All these mega projects have become the symbol of Malaysian economic development and a testimonial to Mahathir's immense contribution. When Mahathir left the political arena in 2002 and sought retirement from active politics, Malaysia was moving in the right direction with regard to its economic strategic plan. However, things started heating up when Najib Razak took over charge as Prime Minister in 2009 and corruption charges against him and his team started making

rounds in the media - particularly after the surfacing of 1MDB scandal in 2015. The blatant and chronic corruption among the ruling elite was the prime reason that coerced Mahathir to return back to politics after 15 years. The announcement of his candidacy for the job of prime minister was perhaps the most jolting one. Mahathir took a stand once again, this time not through a hand-picked proxy - as in the past - but by entering the arena himself. He registered a new political party Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) and joined the new opposition coalition, Pakatan Harapan ("Alliance of Hope") that was founded as a coalition of left-leaning and centre parties. The political analysts were shaky about the success of the aged Mahathir in this election. They were expecting that Najib Razak will use his immense treasure of looted money to execute an aggressive election campaign and will manipulate the voting process to thwart Mahathir's attempt at premiership. Between 2013 and 2017, nearly two million new voters, many of whom between the ages of 21 and 30, were registered. While the young voters, between 21 and 40, accounted for 42 percent of the 14.6 million already registered voters and 70 percent of these young voters were not interested in politics at all, as per many voting advocacy surveys published during the pre-election days. Most young voters only know Mahathir as the "father of modernization", who brought a diversified and high-tech manufacturing base to an economy that had long relied on plantations and mining. Analysts were expecting that Mahathir will not be able to vow the young voters to his side.

During the campaign, the imbalance in resources was very much evident on the streets littered with BN banners and full page advertisements in the print media. The blue colour of Najib Razak's Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition was everywhere, with big smiling portraits of Najib. He had the support of a well-oiled campaign machinery, including foreign advisors. Such was Najib's aura of financial invincibility that even analysts who spotted a rising opposition tide feared he would still manage to win the race by inducing defections and stuffing ballot boxes. At the same time, Mahathir had to struggle to shed off his image of a dictator, who sacked dissenting judges, censored inconvenient journalists, imprisoned his political opponents and dismissed various human rights issues during his two decades of premiership.

Now that Mahathir has sworn in as the world's oldest prime minister and Anwar Ibrahim has been released from the prison, the optimistic version of the story goes like this: Mahathir's return to power will herald the beginning of new phase where justice will be executed and corrupt officials will be subjected to the rigorous accountability, then Mahathir will be replaced by Anwar within two years, fulfilling the pre-poll accord between the two.

Dr. Imran Khalid is a freelance contributor based in Karachi, Pakistan. He has been contributing articles on international relations to various newspapers and journals in the region since 1995. He can be reached at ikhalid99@yahoo.com.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida
Vice Chairman/ Senior Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie
Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019
www.outlookafghanistan.net

افغانستان ما
The Daily Afghanistan Ma

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.