

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



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Kabul Targeted by a Colossal Attack

In a threatening attack, a truck bomb was detonated at the entrance of the Green Zone at Zanaq Square in Kabul city on Wednesday morning. The attack was so massive that it took the lives of at least 85 people and injured around 461 others. Moreover, it brought havoc to the buildings nearby. According to statement by Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI), the private sector suffered nearly \$10 million in damages following the attack. Moreover, ACCI deputy chief, Khan Jan Alokozai, said, "Besides the financial losses inflicted on the private sector as a result of the attack, the majority of those killed and wounded were part of the work force who were working at banks, hospitals and private companies.

This is a great loss for the private sector."

This attack was really cowardly as it targeted the innocent civilians and brought destruction to the offices and buildings where mostly the civilians worked. In addition, it was carried out in the holy month of Ramadan, which is considered as the month of virtue and goodwill. Though Taliban have denied the responsibility for the attack, there are possibilities that the attack might have been carried out by Islamic State or Daesh.

Only a few weeks earlier, a convoy of foreign troops was targeted by a suicide bomber in Kabul. As a result of the attack, eight civilians were killed and at least 24 others were wounded. The attack was claimed by Daesh. The attacks by Daesh have now become frequent in Afghanistan, particularly, in capital Kabul. Only few months earlier, Afghan officials used to deny that Daesh had stronghold in Afghanistan, but the consecutive and large-scale attacks by Daesh insurgents clearly depict that those denials were based on no authentic information. Now, the officials are not even in the position to deny the fact that Daesh is getting stronger in Afghanistan and that points towards a very bleak future as far as security and stability are concerned.

Not long ago an attack on 209 Shaheen Corps Headquarters was carried out by Daesh in Balkh, wherein around 150 soldiers were killed. Moreover, Kabul, itself, has not yet forgotten the brutal attack on Army Hospital that took the lives of many Afghan soldiers. In fact, the statistics show that Afghan people and Afghan security forces have been facing a larger number of casualties since the drawdown of international forces.

The dual threats of Daesh and Taliban have created major security challenges for Afghan security forces, this year as well. Since Taliban have also announced their spring offensive, the coming few months would be really tough for Afghan forces and people. Therefore, it is really imperative that they get fully prepared to face any sort of situation. Moreover, they will try to strengthen their positions in different parts of country.

SIGAR's earlier analysis of the data provided by US Forces in Afghanistan (USFOR-A) suggested that the security situation in Afghanistan had not improved. The numbers of Afghan security forces were decreasing, while both casualties and the number of districts under insurgent control or influence were increasing. Of the 407 districts of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, 233 districts were under government control (83 districts) or influence (150), 41 districts (in 15 provinces) were under insurgent control (9) or influence (32), and 133 districts were "contested." The data clearly shows that the nature of insecurity would be threatening for Afghan government and security forces this year as well. Taliban and Daesh, among other insurgents, have already increased their activities. There are fears among the people in Afghanistan that their lives would once again be influenced badly by the wave of terrorism and insurgency.

After the downfall of Taliban, Afghan people had hoped that their lives would change and the circumstances would lead towards a better and peaceful future, but the last few years have pointed towards worsening security situation. The response of the government in the face of the rising insecurity is really lethargic. It has been largely influenced by the differences that prevail within the ranks of National Unity Government (NUG) regarding the approach that has to be adopted against the situation. The members of NUG see the issue with different perspectives and are not ready to cooperate with each other in designing a comprehensive and unanimous policy to tackle the situation. This has led to misunderstandings and ambiguities in the war against terrorism on operational level as well.

Afghan government, therefore, has to get united and strive to control the situation properly. It needs to understand that as a result of decades of instability and socio-economic and political problems, the Afghan people have been suffering from myriads of problems. Coupled with the issue of insecurity, there are some very concerning issues that exist in our society and threaten the lives of the common people of Afghanistan.

Afghan government must therefore get serious in tackling the issue of the insecurity and strive to protect valuable human resource. ANDSF are vital for the peace and tranquility of the country. Though their profession requires them to be on the forefront of the war, proper strategic planning by the government officials can support them in achieving peace without having to lose many valuable lives. Moreover, proper strategies can assist the government in building its legitimacy and gaining support among the people, who otherwise seem to have lost their hopes about a tranquil and prosperous future.

The Last Glean of Hope for Peace will Die

By Hujjatullah Zia

Much have been said and written about counterinsurgency and peace talks in Afghanistan. In the meantime, democracy and human rights were debated hotly. The post-Taliban Afghanistan moved towards democratization through approving Constitution and conducting presidential and provincial elections. Having equal suffrage, Afghan men and women flocked to ballot boxes hoping for a civil society void of violence and bloodshed. But the public dream did not come true.

The high hopes of Afghan nation for heaving a sigh of relief in a violence-free Afghanistan are yet to come to fruition. Constitutionally, the natural rights and liberty of men and women are inviolable and the government is committed to respect and protect them. Afghan people are free to exercise their rights without a sense of fear.

However, freedoms are curtailed and rights are trampled upon by militant groups. Terrorist networks are strong obstacle before democratization. They continue their blood-bath without showing flexibility to peace talks. The deadly terrorist attack in the heart of Kabul on Wednesday - the 5th day of Holy Month of Ramadan - which, according to the ministry of public health, killed at least 80 people and wounded more than 450 people, including women and children, reveals the stubborn refusal of warring parties to peace talks.

The attack drew the world's strong condemnation. The responsibility for the attack was denied by the Taliban but claimed by the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). However, it has been proved that whenever there are large civilian casualties, the Taliban do not tend to claim the responsibility despite carrying out the attacks. The spate of terrorist attacks comes as the peace process is negotiated among the world's officials.

For instance, Afghanistan, Pakistan and China held the first round of trilateral Practical Cooperation Dialogue (PCD) this week stating that the trilateral cooperation would lead to peace and stability.

In addition, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Angela Merkel talked regarding the issue of terrorism and peace in Afghanistan. The two leaders discussed Afghanistan and reiterated their support for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation.

Reportedly, Kabul will host an international conference on peace, security and reconciliation next week, with representatives from 20 countries likely to attend the event. Combating terrorism is said to be a key agenda item. Afghan government has repeatedly called on warring factions to stop violence and bloodshed and hold negotiation but militants held out against the peace offering continuing their barbar-

ity. Following the Wednesday's deadly attack, the Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah tweeted: "We want peace but, those who kill us in the holy month of Ramadan don't worth a call for peace, they most [sic] be destroyed and uprooted."

Following the death of Mullah Omar's successor, the negotiation of peace came to an unbreakable stalemate. With Haibatullah at the helm, the Taliban fighters continue their offensives in the strongest possible way.

To be honest, the political issue has been highly complicated in Afghanistan. For instance, the rumor circulated this week that helicopters landed in the Taliban-dominated areas in Ghazni province - most likely with the aim of providing weapons - which made some officials suspicious. It is widely accepted that the protracted war in Afghanistan is managed by mysterious hand.

The national and international conferences have not born the desired result. There seems definite reasons behind the failure of peace process.

First, warring factions, especially the Taliban who are largely involved in Afghanistan's militancy, pursue their own political interests and deny to hold talks. Secondly, there are conflicting ideas about peace. After all, the countries, which have political tensions, will not sit around a single table to analyze the roots of terrorism. If the world reaches a unanimous agreement through holding a comprehensive conference, a certain strategy will be adopted to tackle the issue of terrorism more seriously.

For instance, when peace talks came to stalemate, a strong military attack, by coalition and regional forces, on terrorists' safe havens would be carried out, this would certainly mitigate militancy not only in Afghanistan but in the entire region. The third obstacle before instability is political disorder within the government's machinery.

That is to say, a number of key governmental posts and ministries, including the ministries of defense and foreign affairs, are managed by acting heads. These are believed to be the main obstacles before peace and stability.

It is hoped that in the upcoming international conference in Kabul, the world will reach a unanimous decision and adopt an effective strategy in combating terrorism. In brief, if this conference be like a formal gathering as ever before without a tangible result, the last glean of hope of the public will die.

It is further hoped that Afghan nation will be able to exercise their rights and liberty in a democratic society void of horror and terror. Prayerfully, our people will taste the sweet fruit of democracy in the near future after paying large sacrifices for gaining peace.

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NUG - In the Ordeal of Fighting Corruption

By Syed Asif Husaini

The strong campaign against the administrative corruption by the National Unity Government (NUG) yet to come to fruition. Following his victory in the presidential election, Ashraf Ghani called the judicial system corrupt. He revealed a strong sense of concern in this respect stating that the involvement of judicial system in corruption was beyond tolerance and declared a deadline. During its first working days, Ghani's administration took high steps in fighting corruption and Mafia.

The Kabul Bank case was the most perilous and significant issue in counter-corruption and issued decree for pursuing the case. This issue was as critical as the level of Mafia's economic power.

The President's strong determination in fighting corruption and Mafia deserved appreciation, but the glean of hope did not last long for Afghan people. In fact, in the critical time of fighting corruption and Mafia in Afghanistan, reliable administrations and serious determinations have not only been defeated but also disguised. The anti-corruption administrations in former governments, which ushered in fighting this issue initially, succumbed to corruption.

Within thirteen years of chanting slogan against corruption, the former government found itself involved in it. The previous administration will never be forgiven by the public conscience for negligence in fighting corruption. The history will keep its submission to corruption and corrupt individuals. The culture of tribute and violence, which has transferred from politics to administration, is believed to be the strong source of administrative corruption in Afghanistan.

Within three decades of political campaigns, the politicians gained their objectives through violence. Legalizing violence is the very political bribery - which has been widely exploited by authorities in Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai's administration could convince the political dissidents in the same manner as he bestowed large concession to political figures.

From the distant past, parallel posts and positions in the government's structure was created on the basis of political bribery. The spirit of taking political bribery has been deeply imbedded in many politicians and cannot be removed easily. Following the years of conflict in Afghanistan, a large number of those involved in this conflict switched from battle to administrative organization, this will be the main reason behind corruption.

Lack of administrative ability in administrations will exhaust the clients in the country's administrations and will pave the ground for violence. Structural violence has been institutionalized in the same way.

If this trend continues, people will be forced to pay tribute. This is how bribery has been imposed on the faithful

people of Afghanistan. In the post-conflict Afghanistan, Mafia's elements have been attracted to the administrative structure of country via political reconciliation. These individuals went beyond taking bribery and sought to create or deal with Mafia's organizations in the country.

The huge and extensive corruption in the higher level of the government's administration has originated from the very source. Hence, governmental administrative staff will be the main cause of corruption.

Corruption in the government's body is like a widespread virus in the public air. There should be strong determination for combating corruption. In short, the high-ranking officials will have to show determination in this regard. Otherwise, this trend will continue unabated.

A tight control and serious supervision are believed to reduce corruption. This control includes judicial one that will have to prosecute perpetrators.

However, corruption has been highly rife in Afghanistan and harmed the judicial system. That is why perilous criminals are easily released from country's prisons or exonerated in courts.

Although the NUG inserted fighting corruption on the top of its agenda, this struggle was hampered technically. Since Afghanistan's administrations were deeply engaged in corruption, no government would be able to remove the corrupt from the state's structure overnight. The struggles of the NUG to fight corruption have remained in a nascent level. Administrative corruption has penetrated in the state's deep layer and its root has grown stronger.

So, corruption will not be removed through superficial reforms and its root will grow again, in case of being campaigned superficially.

The government determination in fighting corruption will be fruitful only if there is a clear mechanism. In other words, the possibility of administrative corruption exist all around the world, but will be prevented by effective mechanism.

The NUG's decision in adopting effective mechanism about fighting corruption deserves appreciation, but it is not enough. Necessary reforms in procurement and contracts, supervision and control over the offices, establishing high council in implementing the rule of law and founding anti-corruption judicial center are the important measures adopted by the NUG.

But they are not impenetrable filters. The members of Mafia will easily find out the way to escape the filters. Reforming policy and law, improving administrative reform, creating a transparent mechanism for financial management and reforming the judicial system need to be done by the government.

Afghanistan will not get the international aid in case of no reduction in administrative corruption.

Subsequently, the government will raise domestic tax, which will be backbreaking for both state and nation.



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