

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



June 24, 2015

## The Multi-Facet Security Deteriorations

The security situation across the country is persistently worsening. In an attempt to gain territories, the Taliban have heightened their attacks against Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in some northern and southern provinces. According to the Ministry of Interior, military offensive against the insurgents are underway in Takhar, Kunduz, Badakhshan, Sar-e-Pul, Logar, Uruzgan, Paktika and Helmand provinces. Hundreds of insurgents have been killed in a series of military operations last week by the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), the officials say. The ANSF managed to recapture Yamgan district of Badakhshan province from Taliban control, while elsewhere the Taliban captured the key Char Dara district in northern Kunduz province.

The exacerbating security conditions have sparked concerns among the lawmakers in the Upper House of the parliament. The lawmakers expressed their grave concerns on Sunday regarding the exacerbating security in Kunduz province and rise of the Islamic State group across the country particularly in eastern Nangarhar province. There have been media reports in recent days that the Islamic State group is actively recruiting in Nangarhar province as they are active in 14 districts of the province. On the other hand, security incidents and kidnappings in insecure provinces have been on the rise as a number of murder and abductions have taken place on insecure roads and highways in recent weeks.

The Taliban is now fighting for provincial capital of Kunduz province as the Islamic State group is said to be actively recruiting fighters in southern and eastern provinces. There is the probability of rapid expansion of the infamous Islamic State group as breakaway factions of the Taliban are joining the Islamic State group. The exacerbating trend puts the future of the country in ambiguity as the Afghan army and police forces are struggling to contain the militant groups. There are fears that if the government fails to improve the security situation across the country and counter the creeping resurgence of the militant groups, many volatile districts and provinces may fall to the Taliban. If key districts falls to the Taliban, as happened for Char Dara district of Kunduz province, the security situation would quickly deteriorate to the extent beyond control of the government.

In terms of security, the government is now facing two major and immediate threats: the rise of the Islamic State group and the Taliban's spring offensive. However, the rise and expansion of the Islamic State groups is by far a larger threat for future security and stability of Afghanistan. The ANSF are expected to tackle the Taliban's spring offensive efficiently as the Afghan army and police forces have already managed to deprive the Taliban from a major gain except the fall of the Char Dara district of Kunduz province which is already retaken from militants. However, the rise of the Islamic State would be as a game changer as it will alter the array of the jihadi groups and bring unforeseeable challenges to the stability and security of the country.

The robust and speedy process of recruitment by the Islamic State group is indicating that the group may expand more swiftly than expected before. The Taliban is struggling to prevent its members and splintered factions from joining the Islamic State group. However, Taliban members are increasingly parting ways with the main Taliban group and joining the newly emerged Islamic State, or Daesh. There are reports of splits within the Taliban into at least three parts: the main Taliban group loyal to Mullah Mohammad Omar, the breakaway factions joining the Islamic State and some moderate members advocating for negotiating with the government of Afghanistan. The rifts between the Taliban may not be in interests of the Afghan government as previously thought. Any major splits within the Taliban in the first hand would directly benefit the Islamic State group and help the group to expedite the rise in the country.

In the Middle East, the Islamic State groups have proved their capability and resilience in adapting themselves to the environment. Also in Afghanistan, the newly emerging militant group has the potential to recruit fighters and expand quickly as a savage Islamist group. This year is a challenging year for the government of Afghanistan not only due to emergence of the Islamic State but due to different regional Islamist groups taking footholds in the country. The Pakistani military offensive against the Pakistani Taliban in North Waziristan pushed the militant groups to take refuge in Afghanistan. This has now created an unprecedented level of security threats in many of the provinces. The recent kidnappings of civilians on highways and inland roads are attributed to the foreign jihadi groups operating on the Afghan soil.

Presently, the foreign militant groups have also posed threats to the Taliban as well as the group is now worrying about emergence of others groups not operating under flag of the Taliban. But the government cannot ignore the fact that the Islamic State group could turn into a major security threat in a very short span of time. Operation of foreign militant groups on Afghanistan's soil would help the militants to create safe havens in insecure zones of the country for their future operation. The government needs to refocus on tackling the threat of the rising Islamic State group and other foreign militants operating in Afghanistan. The Afghan security agencies need to devise dedicated and transitional plans for countering the Taliban spring offensive as well as the expansion of the Islamic State group.



# The Audacious Taliban Attack on the Parliament

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

The Monday's attack on Afghanistan's Parliament was one of the most audacious attacks organized by the Taliban as part of the group's ongoing spring offensive in the country. According to security officials, all attackers were gunned down, and the attack left at least five dead and 31 injured. The attack seemingly meant to target the Wolesi Jirga's Monday session in which the Second Vice President Mohammad Sarwar Danish was due to introduce the newly picked nominee for Ministry of Defense for a vote of confidence. The attack is coming at a time when the Taliban spring offensive has taken fresh momentum in a number of provinces including Northern Kunduz province. The Monday attack shocked the whole nation, and raised the question whether the government is able to provide security for key institutions like the parliament which are highly vulnerable to Taliban attacks.

The attack on the Parliament's Monday session was of crucial symbolic importance both because of the significance of the legislative institution and the agenda of the House for Monday. The Ministry of Defense is spearheading a national campaign against the Taliban and other militant groups to counter their deadly spring offensive across the country. The Ministry, however, have not had a minister in recent months due to differences among the leaders of the National Unity Government over who should lead the top security agency. Many were criticizing the NUG for lack of leadership from the Ministry of Defense in the ongoing combat against the Taliban. However, still the defense ministry manifested remarkable determination in leading the nationwide anti-insurgency campaign. The Monday attack on the parliament was meant to target the defense department and the efforts to have appointed a minister for the key security institution.

The attack was not the first of its kind. The Afghan parliament was also targeted in the past. However, the militants' storm on the parliament on Monday was exceptionally important because of its timing and the overall trend of war in the country. The Taliban sent a message of determination and resolve in targeting high-valued targets such as key government institutions. The Taliban militants fighting in northern Kunduz province have just seized two key districts in the province. The territory gains in Kunduz and the spectacular attack on the parliament are seen as a key achievement for the insurgents' spring offensive. The scale of the attack on the parliament was surprising for many as the premises of the parliament were highly guarded due to the vulnerability of the parliament to terrorist attacks. Some of the lawmakers were enraged by the government's inability to protect the parliament particularly when an attack on the house was predicted in recent months.

The Monday attack on the parliament and security deterioration elsewhere across the country are indicating intensification of the Taliban spring offensive started two months ago. In recent months, it was expected that the peace efforts would bear fruit and lead the militant leaders to come to table of negotiations with the government of Afghanistan. Afghan officials hoped this would ultimately impact the ongoing war in the country. However, the Taliban have pursued a two-track path of war and diplomacy efforts this year. The militant groups have heightened their

insurgency campaign in form of the spring offensive.

On the other hand, the militant group has also taken a different approach towards the groups' diplomacy as they have started engaging diplomatically with the foreign stakeholders as well as Afghan non-government parties. Partly, the Taliban's two-track war and peace efforts is because of Afghanistan's reliance on Pakistan's role and influence for bringing Taliban leaders to table of negotiations. The Taliban have expressed their grievances of the recent Afghan and Pakistani thaws in relations and the Afghan government's approach of seeking peace with Taliban through Pakistan. The Taliban have always been sensitive to how their relations with Pakistan are interpreted. As Islamabad have indicated that Pakistan has no full control over the Taliban, the Taliban leadership is eager to show that they are acting independently in matters of the ongoing war and the peace efforts. Afghanistan's reliance to Pakistan for peace has further encouraged the Taliban to wage a deadly last-minute war before any inevitable peace dialogue with the government of Afghanistan.

On the other hand, this while the Pakistani government is yet to exert any serious pressure against the Taliban in response to Afghanistan's calls for a genuine support from Islamabad regarding the peace process. Recently, President Ashraf Ghani also urged Islamabad to take concrete measures against Taliban leadership operating in the country. Lack of any concrete action from Pakistan has provided the Taliban the opportunity to pursue a dual track of war and peace diplomacy for having an upper hand in any possible peace talks in the future. The Taliban seem to be preparing for entering peace talks with the government of Afghanistan.

On Tuesday June 23, 2015, Sartaj Aziz, Pakistan's prime minister's adviser on foreign affairs and national security said that Afghan government and Taliban will likely meet in a week time. With the same tone, Aziz expressed optimism an unprecedented breakthrough is expected in three months time. He informed Islamabad helped facilitated a meeting between Taliban representatives and Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) headed by Masoom Stanekzai in Urumqi, China, last month.

The Taliban have been engaging in preliminary talks with a number of foreign mediators and informal talks with different parties from Afghanistan. The group's dual track of war and peace diplomacy is benefiting the group both in the battlefield and at any stage for peace talks. The expansion of the war, gaining territories in frontlines and the spectacular attacks such as Monday attack on the parliament are all benefiting the Taliban and giving them the upper hand both on the ground and at table of peace negotiations. The two-track war and peace approach by the Taliban is also empowering the Taliban against other newly emerging players such as the Islamic State group which is threatening the Taliban supremacy in Afghanistan. The Taliban heightened war is also meant to overcome its internal challenges and the rifts between the moderate and more headline members of the group.

The government of Afghanistan needs a dedicated transitional plan for countering the new war-and-peace approach of the Taliban. If the government fails to effectively counter the Taliban's pre-peace war approach, it would not be able to enter successful peace negotiations with the militant groups.

Abdul Ahad Bahrami is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at [ahad.bahrami@gmail.com](mailto:ahad.bahrami@gmail.com)

## Education Suffers a State of Denial!

By Asmatyari

Education is one of the necessities of the humans and, therefore, a prime responsibility and obligation of the states and governments to impose it without any regional or class discrimination. Many states like that of ours, myopically perceive the fate of nation guided by foreign investments or donations which is unarguable fallacy. It is the right time, to realize, education economy can duly carry us along the avenues of long-lasting success. Without giving education first priority we can not keep pace with technological, innovative and scientific advancement the world has attained. The education itself is a proof to the progressiveness and development of the nations. The most developed nations in the worlds have most developed and best education systems while, the underdeveloped, struggling ones and one with the bad economy and global ranks have the bad education systems when compared to the developed ones.

Education is a versatile agent of change that guarantees stability, social cohesion and societal uplift whilst ensuring respect for human rights. Many societal problems get regulated after education stand top most priority. The skinny budget allocated for education ridicules us as a nation and marks deep-rooted state of intellectual bankruptcy. Unless education renders preliminary requisite, success may remain a daydream.

Sticking to state of constant denial, owing the responsibility of mishaps undertaken in one's realm marks an in-depth degree of incompetence whilst negating any expectancy of betterment. Consequently the politician lost in delusion try not to revisit the grey areas of governance, consequently improvement turned an intangible target given a rational dictum for intellectual and material achievements has never been a persuasable discourse for our politician. Regrettably the efforts are mostly exercised to earn the credit for else good deeds instead of owing and following a clear stance.

Afghanistan making education sector's priority is reflected from its spending on education. At present the spending on education is not enough seeing the magnitude of illiteracy. The remedy is to increase the proportion of public resources going into education. If tax-to-GDP ratio cannot be increased, the state should be willing to divert resources from sectors with lower priority towards education. The donor community has been prepared to help with funds when it is not feared that domestic resources were constrained to allow for an increase in public sector expenditure on education.

On the contrary, the state of education is aggravated in this piece of land. By 2013 there were 10.5 million out of 27.5 million population attending schools in Afghanistan. About 35% of its population is unemployed and 36% live below the national poverty line, suffering from shortages of housing, clean drinking water, and electricity. On United Nations' Human Development Index Afghanistan ranks 175th with nation's GDP stands at about \$34 billion. This is far less than Japan's spending on education.

The worries do not end here, in fact the teacher equally worst affected by

dysfunctional education. The information available confirms, 73% of teachers lack the minimum required qualification of grade 14 graduation and are in need of professional development; over 5,000 of Educational Institutions do not have usable buildings which has a direct impact on quality of education. This is the worst state of affairs when the incumbent government is silent on the declining effectiveness of educational system and its immediate negative effect on the holistic rise of a nation is evident.

It is irrefutably crucial; teachers are important stakeholders for better upbringing of forthcoming generation. If their rights are denied or delayed, then how would one expect a vital change be brought in the illiteracy stricken society? How could the dream of a matchless and outstanding country come true when the pumping organ of education sector; teachers are denied rights to fair livelihood?

Formerly, in a ceremony marking teacher's day in Kabul, President Ghani promised to increase the salaries of teachers and to allot each of them a piece of land within six months – a process which has not happened. Months after the unmet promise enraged the teachers and coerced them out in the street to get their demand met. There are dozens of teachers from different parts of Kabul went on strike since former Saturday at Habibia High School. Despite the teachers' strike entering in month, the government falling short coming up with an agreeable solution to protesting teachers, marks the underlying indifference and government's negligence.

Contrarily, the quality of poor instruction should preliminarily be considered. The obvious solution is to invest in teacher training, reforming the curriculum and improving the quality of textbooks that should be deficient of religio-ethnic biases. The high quality and standard of books must be kept on top priorities. There may be poorly constructed or the buildings may be poorly maintained. The students may not even have chairs and desks where they can sit and work. This problem can be handled, by committing more resources for public sector education. An autonomous Education Commission should be build whose members are nominated by the government with approval from the national assembly, who should be charged with preparation of new syllabus acquainted with latest developments in the contemporary world of science and technologies and the current needs of people.

At these very dismal circumstances the government has to turn education sector into one of the well-funded sector, aiming to rid the country out of calamity of illiteracy. The government must work on training, welfare and other facilities of teachers to make it a preferable and a dignified sector. The teachers should only be inducted provided they pass various stages of test and interviews. It is right time the government gets this sector streamlined well nurtured capable to compete with developing counties of the world. A nation reaches to prominence, turn unbeatable and matchless, only when greater intrepid steps are taken to eliminate illiteracy by declaring the state of educational emergency. The profound significance of education in societal ascend is established and undisputed, contrary to being failed to inspire our politicians.

Asmatyari is a permanent writer of Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at [asmatyar@gmail.com](mailto:asmatyar@gmail.com)



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: [outlookafghanistan@gmail.com](mailto: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.