

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



June 26, 2019

Why Council of Afghan Presidential Candidates Deceive Their Own People

Afghanistan Presidential hopefuls staged a rally on Thursday urging the formation of a takeover government and resignation of the elected Afghan president Ghani. According to the reports only 2 people out of the 10 knew why they were there. Afghan government welcomed the political gathering but said it found no new issue in the communiqué of the Afghan Presidential Candidates.

As most of the people did not know about the real agenda of the candidate and also many people were there because they were paid by the candidates, these acts of the candidates are the signs of deceiving the people and making lie to them.

It is necessary to assess the causes and consequences of these acts of candidates. It is self-explanatory that political leaders in democratic political systems are much more dependent than autocrats on public support for election policy initiatives. If they conclude they cannot compete with their rivals in a fair manner, then they find no other way except making lies to the people to have their support or gain their votes. As a result, they resort to deceiving the people as a powerful incentive to gain badly needed public support.

Based on this, Afghans must face the troubling realization that Afghan leaders will be unusually prone to engage in lying as well as different forms of deceptions to have the support of their own populations. Thus, politicians will resort to distortion, exaggeration, misrepresentation, deception, half-truth and overstatement. The reason is that they think the risk is worth it. According to this approach the consequences of a politician getting caught are outweighed – they think – by the benefits of telling voters what they want to hear.

The consequences of deceiving the People

The approach of the political leaders to gain the support of the people by lying to them has severe consequences. People will lose their trust to the political mechanisms, it may lead to short-term political and policy performance but it will have negative impacts on political participation. Further, this approach will lead to the 'Anger' at government, increases partisan divides among the politically engaged, most government agencies will be viewed unfavorably by majorities of the public, and Young people will lose confidence in the nation's direction.

The protest staged by the Afghan presidential hopefuls urging the establishment of an interim government and resignation of President Ghani, reminds the 1990s in Afghanistan. The Council of the Afghan Presidential Candidates is just deceiving the people by telling lies about the peace process, security and participation of the people in the public administration. They may gain some short policy achievements but will make the people to distrust the political system and democratic processes.



Will the US - Iran War Benefit Anyone?

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Few days ago, Iran shot down a United States RQ-4A Global Hawk BAMS-D surveillance drone with a khordad-3 surface-to-air missile over the Strait of Hormuz. It is said that the cost of the downed drone was some \$150 million. Iranian officials claimed that the drone violated their airspace, while the U.S. officials initially claimed that the drone was in international airspace. The incident occurred amid rising tension between the two countries and nearly resulted in an armed confrontation.

Iranian Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif, tweeted a hand-drawn map of the drone's alleged flight path through the Strait of Hormuz. "At 00:14 US drone took off from UAE in stealth mode & violated Iranian airspace," Zarif wrote. "It was targeted at 04:05 at the coordinates (25°59'43"N 57°02'25"E) near Kouh-e Mobarak. We have retrieved sections of the US military drone in our territorial waters where it was shot down." Zarif also tweeted that the U.S. is "lying about international waters." Iranian Brigadier General Rahimzadeh also said that Iran had sent the U.S. "several warning" before downing the drone, according to Iran's semi-official news agency, Tasnim.

In response to that, the U.S. performed cyber attacks on the IRGC's missile weapons systems, announced new sanctions against Iran, and requested a closed-door U.N. Security Council meeting to address the regional tensions, reported by multiple sources. President Trump also ordered a military strike against some IRGC radar sites, but 10 minutes before the strike he aborted the order. In an interview which aired today by CNN, Trump said that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford significantly influenced his decision. However, he said there are two types of people around him termed as eagles that push to war and pigeons that encourage to peace and patience.

Moreover, President Donald Trump issued a warning to Iran Sunday, saying if the nation were to take further military action against the US, it could expect severe American retaliation. Trump made the comments during an interview with NBC's Meet the Press that aired on Sunday in explaining why he decided not to order any physical military retaliation after Iran shot down a US drone it claimed was in its airspace. "What happened is, I said, 'I am not going to do it. I will save it. If they do something else, it will be double,'" Trump said. He also said, "I am not looking for war and if there is, it will be obliteration like you have never seen before."

This event was vastly reflected in the media; given the ideas and opinions were debated, there are two types of interpretations from why President Trump has refrained from attack on Iran at the final step. Some people call it as victory for Iran saying that Iran is not a weak country like Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan to let US win the war easily.

While others assign it on policy of Trump as he is on the eve of elections and it is not a right time for him to engage in conflicts with Iran. There are also people who believe that the event was a kind of humiliation to the US but as a pride and glory for Iran.

Unfortunately, there were no one who assign it on victory all human beings, win of rationalism on extremisms or as Trump termed it win of pigeons on eagles; If Trump had made some good decisions in his life, it was one the best ones because war is not in benevolence of any country in the world. In fact, it showed more his rationalism, futurism and patience than his weakness because the future of war is dark. Those who are interested in war they should come to see the result of war in Afghanistan, Iraq, Bahrain and Syria.

Both the United States and Iran are great countries that expected to play constructive roles in the world. There are many problems in the already turmoil world that threaten all human being, including Iran and America such as terrorism, war, climate change, migration, poverty and so on. Billions of people are living without the very basic necessities of life - food, water, housing and sanitation. According to a report 1.2 billion (20%) of the world population now lives on less than \$1/day, another 1.8 billion (30%) lives on less than \$2/day, 800 million go to bed hungry every day, and 30,000 - 60,000 die each day from hunger alone while every year around 80 million people are added to the current hungry populations. So, if today we engage to annihilate one and other tomorrow these issues will annihilate all of us.

Therefore, if the war happens, it deeply affects the entire region and the world; this will easily intensify the ongoing conflicts and crisis in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan and also other parts of the world. The interruptions of oil exports from the Gulf, pushing prices to unprecedented heights, and also a global economic recession will be some of the consequences. Moreover, the Iran and US's rivals will also try to intensify and trouble the water to fish in. While People of Iran and America have lots commonalities if the policy makers change their senseless hostile views to a constructive friendship.

Finally, if the war happens, it is more probably that US win the war but not necessarily with their goals and interests. With winning the war, it probably causes the collapse of the Iranian government and would create chaos and internal conflict in Iran which imposes several times more expenses to the US than Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran alone has more population than Iraq and Afghanistan, strategic geography, stronger soft and hard weapons. Consequently, going to war will not benefit anyone in the world.

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"The European Union and Afghanistan – Prospects for Peace".

By: EFSAS

In its recently published article, "The European Union and Afghanistan – Prospects for Peace", the European Foundation for South Asian Studies (EFSAS) described the European Union's (EU) strategy in Afghanistan, highlighting how the EU has consolidated its effort to accompany the Afghan government in its crucial transitional phase through two principal agreements: the EU-Afghanistan Strategy and the EU-Afghanistan Cooperation Agreement. In mid-May, the second Joint Committee under the EU-Afghanistan Cooperation Agreement for Partnership and Development met in Kabul, to discuss the ongoing progress in regards to the cooperation agreement signed by both the EU and Afghanistan in February 2017. One of the focal points of this agreement is the EU's assistance to Afghanistan in regional and international development, as Afghanistan's strategic geographic position places it at the crossroads of South and Central Asia, the country's relationship with its neighbours is crucial for its own development and the stability of the region as a whole. Furthermore, the stakes at play in Afghanistan like the migratory flows, heroin trafficking and the resolution of four decades of conflict, have naturally captured the interest of the country's Central Asian neighbours. And so, like a well-meaning mentor, the EU has taken Afghanistan, or rather Ashraf Ghani's government, by the hand and is trying to lead it on the path of reconstruction.

Furthermore, EFSAS explained how the EU has expressed its opinion that the peace process should be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and has pledged support to Ashraf Ghani's government, but has side-lined itself from the Doha peace talks between the United States (US) and the Taliban. Having invested millions of euros in development and humanitarian aid, the EU cannot afford to let its efforts in Afghanistan go waste. Organising political dialogues between the EU, Afghanistan and its neighbours is certainly a good initiative, however if Ghani's government is overthrown by the Taliban because the US has decided to give in and withdraw its forces, then the political dialogue will be quickly forgotten and would not have had time to bear any fruit. In its efforts to aid Afghanistan in its State building and governance capacities, it would seem the EU has overlooked a crucial step: having an inclusive, effective, legitimate government to build the State in the first place.

In its article EFSAS deliberated why it is unfair and unrealistic to place the burden of a political dialogue on the shoulders of only the EU. In 40 years, no one, neither Afghans nor the foreigners that invaded Afghanistan, have been able to find or form the government that would bring national unity, stability and prosperity to a country that withers in the chaos of ethnic division. The EU can sign all the agreements and strategies it pleases, but the reality remains that these will not be sustainable until the Afghan people decide

upon, a new, inclusive form of governance. The EU has preached the Afghan-led, Afghan-owned argument, but this does not mean the peace process cannot be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and EU-aided. As it has pledged to be a guarantor in the peace process, what is preventing it from taking on this role?

EFSAS illustrated the EU's financial aid to Afghanistan that is delivered with the aim to maintain the standards achieved since the fall of the Taliban. The financial aid has led to some progress, for example, 57% of the population now has access to health care, over 120,000 police officers have received salaries from one of the EU's trust funds for Afghanistan, and more than 35% of rural and urban Community Development Council members are female, which is considerable progress as compared to the oppressive conditions women were subjected to under the Taliban rule.

EFSAS also elucidated on the fact that there are two factors that can explain the rapid deterioration of Afghanistan's (already lacking) security conditions. Firstly, the Taliban is steadily regaining pre-US invasion territory battling the Afghan government and foreign military forces in its path. Secondly, the Islamic State (IS)'s expansion into the country has added more fuel to the fire. IS declared its stronghold in Afghanistan back in 2015 in Khorasan province, but since losing significant amounts of territory in the Middle East, reports indicate that IS fighters are moving towards South Asia, starting with Afghanistan.

The EU has demonstrated its dedication to fighting terrorism, both in and out of Europe's borders and Afghanistan is now riddled with two of the world's most dangerous terrorist organisations, whose ideologies are both violently against the West. The European Union's efforts in promoting human rights in Afghanistan are more vulnerable than ever; the EU must concentrate part of its Afghan agenda to developing effective counterterrorism policies.

EFSAS concludes in its article that the Afghan peace process has attracted a lot of onlookers. Some parties, such as China, Russia and Iran, maintain a close eye on the situation in order to better position their interests in the country. Afghanistan's regional neighbours, Pakistan and India, could potentially use Afghanistan as a new battleground for regional influence. Pakistan's role in the peace process is significant, as its military establishment maintains close ties to the Afghan Taliban.

The EU's sui-generis makeup places it as the best candidate to take the peace process to the next level. It does not make decisions based on the interests of a single government, unlike a regular nation-state, and it has demonstrated its will and ability to invest time, money and resources into Afghanistan. The EU should take steps towards establishing an inclusive dialogue, with perhaps, itself as a moderator, if it wants to ensure the sustainability of its investments and longevity of its agreements with Afghanistan.

(EFSAS) is the European Foundation for South Asian Studies



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