

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



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## Ill Governance Generates Social Problems

It is a crystal clear fact that whenever and wherever a government fails to provide proper governance, different sorts of issues and trouble erupt and soon get out of control. Same is true for Afghanistan; as the government is not able to reach to the people properly to solve their issues they suffer from different social problems. There are many parts of the country that are remote and do not experience any sort of positive intervention by the government. Therefore, they suffer from lack of rudimentary requirements of life.

Many of them do not have clear drinking water. Most of others live without health facilities and the rest are suffering because of unavailability of light or fuel to burn. Central Afghanistan, in this regard, has to undergo the worst circumstances.

There are many governance issues in this region, but the government seems reluctant to reach to the people and provide due assistance. Recently, it was revealed by local officials that seven children lost their lives as a result of an "unknown disease" in a village of Ghazni's Nawur district in central Afghanistan in the last few days. There are fears that more than 40 children are infected by the disease. However, there are no proper facilities to face this challenge. Major symptoms of the disease include breathing problems, pneumonia and abdominal pains.

Head of Ghazni Provincial Council, Khaliqdad Akbari has said that the roads to the district are closed due to snowfalls that have not yet been removed by the relevant authorities.

He also stated that more children would lose their lives if the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) does not provide emergency aid to the affected areas by helicopters.

The situation is really tragic and require speedy action by the MoPH to avoid further loss of innocent lives. Moreover, this also shows the incapacity of Afghan government to provide medical facilities to the people of remote areas. Medical sector, as a whole, has been ignored even after so many tragedies that have taken the lives of thousands of the people. And there are large possibilities that any sort of contagious disease, if spread in any part of the country, would influence many people in not time.

With the situation as grave as mentioned above, the fact remains that the country is suffering severely from the dearth of better medical facilities for most of its people. The health facilities are not proper and most of the diseases that people suffer from stay untreated even in the large cities of the country. At the same time, the quality of services provided by government hospitals is really very low, their number is not sufficient and they are not established in most of the remote areas; therefore, most of the people do not have access to them. On the other hand private hospitals have been established that can, in no way, be afforded by the people who do not have enough food to eat.

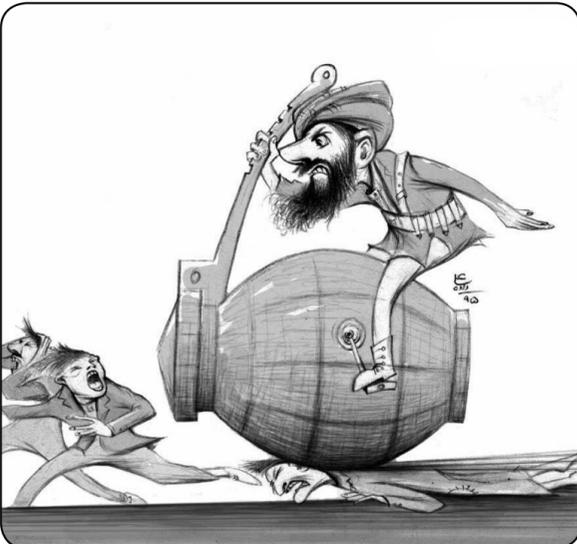
Most of the people are compelled to go to other countries for treatment. They mostly go to the neighboring countries like India and Pakistan and there again they have to spend a large sum of money. Apart from the health services they avail they have to pay for the travel expenses as well. If there are such facilities provided in the country, the people would never require to go out and would not take money out of the country as well. However, it is important to note that such facilities can only be acquired by the rich people. As the ruling class in our society can pay for those facilities they mostly do not care whether the poor people in the country can have better access to health facilities.

Such a scenario is really dreadful and there should be serious efforts to deal with the situation. Short term projects will never solve the health issues in Afghanistan.

Afghan government and the supporting nations must pursue long-term strategies to handle the issue, if they want to help the people of Afghanistan. At the same time, corruption and loose control, regarding the quality of medicine that is sold in the country, is another major issue, which is responsible for further debilitating the health of the people instead of supporting them during their ill health.

Different studies by different organizations have shown that though millions of dollars have been poured into the health sector, there are many Afghans who have their nearest health center at a distance of three days and unfortunately two-thirds of pharmacies do not have professional staff.

Such a scenario is really dreadful and worth special attention; moreover, only lip service would do no good to change the scenario. Therefore, the authoritative people must take necessary measures and must curb the situation as the issue is very delicate and it is related to the lives of the people. The remote and ignored areas in this regard must get most of the attention.



## Counter-insurgency Mechanism

By Hujjatullah Zia

Reeling from the death of Mullah Abdul Salam, the Taliban elements seek to intensify their attacks. A series of suicide attacks have been occurred recently across the country, mainly in the capital Kabul, which killed and wounded dozens of civilians. Following the deadly attacks in Pakistan, on February 16, which killed and wounded more than two hundred people, the Taliban are likely to come under heavy bombings carried out by Afghan-Pakistan military forces.

Turning down Kabul's call for negotiation, Taliban are combated strongly. Of late, the Taliban fighters sustained large casualties. Their high-ranking leader Mullah Abdul Salam, a shadow governor for Kunduz, along with his two commanders, Qari Amin and Dr. Husain, has been killed last week. Salam was known as Taliban's war machine in Kunduz and in the eastern regions. Subsequently, President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani said that the Taliban no longer posed a threat to Kunduz province and hailed the Afghan air force for killing Salam.

Moreover, the Afghan interior ministry said the demise of the Taliban group's main war strategist would inflict a major blow to group's activities in Kunduz.

The Taliban have been constantly targeting the Afghan forces in the strategic town of Kunduz in northern Afghanistan in its attempts to infiltrate other regions in the north. Under Salam as Taliban war strategist, the insurgents last year, managed to capture the center of Kunduz. The takeover of Kunduz by the Taliban sparked strong retaliation from the Afghan public and political forces.

Afghan-Pak mutual relations have hit rock bottom in recent months with Islamabad and Kabul accusing each other of harboring anti-state militant groups and sponsoring terrorist attacks on their respective soils. Tensions worsened this month when Pakistani leaders blamed militants sheltering on the Afghan side for a series of suicide bombings and other attacks across the country that killed scores of people. The military also handed over a list of 76 militant leaders to the Afghan government following the bloodshed and demanded swift action against them and their extradition to Pakistan. Afghanistan pointed fingers back at Pakistan, handing over a list of 85 Taliban and Haqqani Network militants, including Maulvi Haibatullah and Siraj Haqqani, and 32 training camps.

This blunted Pakistan's offensive to highlight the presence of terror sanctuaries in Afghanistan. A Pakistani writer pointed out, "Tensions mainly escalated this time because of the absence of an effective security cooperation mechanism and our knee-jerk reaction."

The counter insurgency is a great challenge for both Afghan and US forces and large sacrifices were made in this regard. It is said that an average 20 Afghan soldiers are killed per

day in the battle against terrorist groups which is really shocking especially as the government is hardly able to fill their vacuum with recruiting new soldiers. Moreover, the US soldiers paid high sacrifices with ushering in "war on terror" following the 9/11 terrorist attack, about 2247 soldiers were killed and 20,000 more were wounded.

It is believed that for rehabilitating Afghanistan, the US spent larger amount of money than rehabilitating the Europe after the World War II but the country still suffers from poverty. However, the outcome of US's attack against al-Qaeda and the Taliban is aborting any other probable attacks against its country.

The US president Donald Trump has not outlined his policy towards Afghanistan. Taking the office about more than a month ago, Trump said that he battled against "radical Islamic terrorism", which he pledged to "eradicate from the face of the Earth." But his first approach which is signing Muslim bans has triggered a nationwide backlash.

Since the US forces, along with Afghan soldiers and civilians, have been victimized on a large scale by terrorist groups and a great deal of money has been spent in supporting democracy, it is hoped that Trump will continue the "war on terror" in more effective way and break the deadlock so as to save streams of blood spilt in this regard. It is believed that abandoning Afghanistan will undermine democracy in the country and it is tantamount to disregarding all the human and financial investments.

No wonder, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the US have sustained large casualties by terrorist groups and there is a strong need for joint military operations against all terrorists' hubs - be it in Afghanistan or Pakistan. In other words, the peace deadlock seems unbreakable and since atrocity runs in the blood of the Taliban elements, they will continue targeting combatants and non-combatants.

The negotiation, which was pursued tirelessly for about a decade, was proved abortive and the only alternative option is a joint military operation against terrorist sanctuaries.

The Ghani administration stands strongly against warring factions. Afghan President asks the UN to put Haibatullah's name on the blacklist.

Unlike Karzai's government, the NUG has clear definition for the Taliban and deems it the enemy of nation rather than "discontented brother". Furthermore, the intensified military operations and bombings against the Taliban reveal the NUG's strong will for counter-insurgency.

The "war on terror" will not come to fruition unless a trilateral military operation is launched against warring factions with bona fide intention for stability. Otherwise, knee-jerk reaction or sporadic operation rooting from a surge of anger in retaliation, as Islamabad does, will not tackle the issue.

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## The Geopolitics of Environmental Challenges

By Giulio Boccaletti

Much of the world seems to be on edge. The West's relationship with Russia, the future of NATO, the Syrian civil war and refugees, rising right-wing populism, the impact of automation, and the United Kingdom's impending departure from the European Union: all of these topics - and more - have roiled public debate worldwide. But one issue - one might say the most significant of them all - is being ignored or pushed aside: the environment.

That was the case at this year's annual meeting of the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland. Beyond a mention of the Paris climate agreement by Chinese President Xi Jinping, topics like climate change and sustainable development didn't even make it to the main stage. Instead, they were relegated to side meetings that rarely seemed to intersect with current political and economic events. Allowing environmental issues to fall by the wayside at this time of geopolitical and social instability is a mistake, and not just because this happens to be a critical moment in the fight to manage climate change.

Environmental degradation and natural-resource insecurity are undermining our ability to tackle some of the biggest global issues we face. Environmental insecurity is a major, though often underestimated, contributor to global instability. The UN High Commission on Refugees reports that natural disasters have displaced more than 26 million people per year since 2008 - almost a third of the total number of forcibly displaced people in this time period.

Even the current refugee crisis has an environmental element. In the years leading up to the war, Syria experienced its most extreme drought in recorded history.

That drought, together with unsustainable agricultural practices and poor resource management, contributed to the internal displacement of 1.5 million Syrians and catalyzed political unrest ahead of the 2011 uprising.

The link between environmental and agricultural pressures extends far beyond Syria. Over-reliance on specific geographies for agriculture means that food production can exacerbate environmental problems, or even create new ones. This can pit global consumer interests against local citizen interests, as it has along the Mississippi River, where fertilizer runoff from one of the world's breadbaskets is contributing to concerns about water quality.

The connection goes both ways, with environmental conditions also shaping agricultural production - and, in turn, the prices of agricultural commodities, which represent about 10% of traded goods worldwide. For example, rising temperatures and altered precipitation patterns are already driving up the price of coffee. With the global land area

suitable for growing coffee set to contract by up to half by 2050, price pressures will only intensify. A sudden shift toward trade protectionism could drive up agricultural commodity prices further.

Such an increase would affect farm-level household income, favoring some farmers while harming others. End consumers, particularly the poor and vulnerable, would also suffer. Another reason why the environment should be at the center of economic debates is its role as the world's single largest employer.

Almost a billion people, just under 20% of the world's labor force, are formally employed in agriculture. Another billion or so are engaged in subsistence farming, and therefore don't register in formal wage statistics.

Any initiatives to support economic development must support this population's transition toward higher-productivity activities. This is particularly important at a time when increasingly sophisticated and integrated technology threatens to leapfrog an entire generation of workers in some countries. Efforts to benefit this huge population must focus not only on training and education, but also on new models that allow countries to capitalize on their natural capital - the landscapes, watersheds, and seascapes - without depleting it. Just as natural-resource insecurity can cause displacement and vulnerability, effective natural-resource management can support conflict resolution and sustainable economic development.

On this front, efforts to achieve environmental remediation, to boost the resilience of rural communities, to advance sustainable agricultural production, and to support community-based environmental stewardship have all shown promising results. Consider the Northern Rangelands Trust, an organization focused on creating community conservancies to enable sustainable and equitable land use in Kenya. NRT has helped pastoralist communities establish effective governance mechanisms for the environment on which they depend, reducing conflict over grazing rights, especially in times of drought.

For many communities, members' relationship with the landscape in which they live is an integral part of their identity. With effective governance and planning, open dialogue, resource-sharing frameworks, and sufficient investment, including in skills training, these communities can translate this relationship into effective environmental stewardship - and build healthier and more secure societies. The crises engulfing the modern world are complex. But one thing is clear: the environment is connected to all of them. Solutions will mean little without a healthy world in which to implement them. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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