

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



May 09, 2015

Growing Instability

Terrorism is an illegal and unlawful in nature with a purpose of creating fear and panic in the minds and psyche of people at large, to make the masses feel impotent and helpless, to discourage rational thinking and to lead to a reactionary tendency in the people.

Deteriorating security condition, escalating insurgency, militancy, talibanization and worsening state of law and order are the immediate common issues; Afghanistan is passing through these days. Terrorism is a hazard for mankind. Afghanistan faces the problems of poverty, population, hunger and illiteracy. But spread of terrorism has been the most frightening of all. Terrorism is the cruelest of crimes which kills less criminals but more innocent citizens. The news of successful terror attacks in some countries with inclusion to Afghanistan makes us take in that the terrorists have grown unbeatable.

Nobody would need to expose the violent nature of Taliban as they themselves have clearly shown through different ways.

These gloomy reports show how insecurity and terrorism have been threatening the lives of the common people in Afghanistan. The common people, after suffering from decades of war and bloodshed deserve a relatively peaceful life. They have given so many sacrifices and now they hope that they would have tranquil life in the times to come. However, there is no guarantee that their hopes would turn into reality.

The common masses in Afghanistan must bother about the deterioration in security as they are basically the ones who have been suffering and may suffer to a further extent if instability and terrorism prevail in the country. It is really pathetic to see the civilians losing their lives when they have nothing to do with the war. In the economically unstable and war-torn country like Afghanistan, people have not only suffered the hardships of the poor and miserable lives but also the horrors of war. They have been killed mercilessly as if their lives do not have any value or meaning the state security apparatus.

According to a reports, Taliban insurgents attacked a volleyball ground in Paktia province on Thursday May 07, 2015, killing at least two persons, injuring six and taking away dozens others. Deputy governor Abdul Wali Sahi said that the attack took place in Shagi area of the Zazi Aryub district adding that the Taliban fighters opened fire the playground, killing two persons, including a policeman who was in civilian dress.

Three children and as many women were also injured when the insurgents resorted to firing in the air, the deputy governor said.

The security situation in Afghanistan is getting really serious and it is very important to consider the situation seriously. The Taliban insurgents have become so much bold and active that they are not afraid of targeting even the most guarded places and they have become so cowardly that they are not afraid of targeting the civilians more frequently now. The recent attacks showed that Taliban have no mercy to anyone and they would take every possible step to help the situation deteriorate in the country.

Terrorism has become a headache for the government and a nightmare for public. Though, it is a global issue but Afghanistan has to bear the brunt of it. This daunting situation is caused due to several factors. These factors include social injustice, economic disparity, political instability, religious intolerance and also external hands or international conspiracies. A handful of people who have their vicious interests to fulfill have not only taken countless innocent lives but also distorted the real image of Islam before the world through their heinous acts. Terrorist acts like suicide bombings have become a norm of the day. On account of these attacks Afghanistan is suffering from inextinguishable loss ranging from civilian to economic. People have become numerical figures, blown up in numbers every now and then. Terrorists have not spared any place. Bazaars, mosques, educational institutes, offices, hotels, roadside no place are safe anymore. Terrorists resort to various ways to accomplish these goals like planting crude home-made bombs, hand-grenades or other explosives in a shopping centre, hotels or a crowded place like a bus stand or even a bus, train or airplane, kidnapping, assassination or hijacking. Different terrorist activities all over the world may have different aims, but a few goals, common to all may be underlined. It may be because they want a regime to react or they intend to mobilize a mass support through fear, to eliminate opponents or enemies or to magnify their cause. This tactic is popularly used by Taliban.

Terrorism is a problem which the country has been continuously facing for more than a decade but now has emerged as a global problem against which an internationally united battle has to be fought incessantly.

The innocent people of Afghanistan deserve better and the Afghan government and the international community must ensure to them a better future. World leaders and Afghanistan elders should believe that global fairness, peace and human dignity is in the best interest of the global community and terrorism is the greatest menace to Afghanistan causing instability, thus must be curbed iron handed.



In the Political Doldrums

By Hujjatullah Zia

A group of activists staged a re-enactment of abduction of 31 passengers who were seized from Shah Joy district of southern Zabul province by unknown masked men on February 24th.

The abductees had heavy chains fastened around their legs and arms and forced to lie on the ground before the eyes of their family members. Bitter tears rolled down the wrinkled cheeks of their old mothers - whose swollen eyes clearly reflected their anguish.

The abduction of 31 passengers sparked wide protests across the country and raised public concerns. The activists claim President Ashraf Ghani in a ten minutes meeting with abductees' families in the Presidential Palace presented a grim picture. Relatives of the kidnapped passengers have lost ray of hope after meeting the president. The government has no clue about the passengers' whereabouts. They said that though the authorities tried to rescue the hostages but could no more assure their safe release.

"We contacted the Taliban through tribal elders but Taliban said they are not behind this kidnapping. We believe they are Daesh (ISIS)." These words were spoken by Abdul Khaliq Ayubi, a local government official soon after the abduction. Afghan officials confirmed in January that ISIS was operating in southern parts of the country.

However, the abductors were said to speak in a foreign language and were believed to be foreigners. As far as I can tell the Afghanistan's porous border is crossed widely by the mass militants who carry out terrorist acts inside the country. According to analysts since the Taliban militants are not ruled by a central power, a number of them have pledged allegiance to Daesh to have their supports in militancy and terrorism. This fact was revealed when a drone strike killed the top recruiter for Daesh in Afghanistan. So, the abductors must be the Taliban - who share strong ties with Daesh - from across the border.

Following the abduction, media reports suggested that the abductors demanded release of insurgents from Afghan prisons - which was turned down by the Afghan president. This supports the evidence to claim that the Taliban were behind the incident.

Daesh, however, has raised the officials' concerns. As a result, President Ghani said on his trip to India as, "With all apologies to Microsoft, if al-Qaeda was Windows One, Daesh is Windows Five. Terrorism is fast changing its ecology and morphology and its communication strategies." Then he suggested "four phases" to counter terrorism, which are "called observe, orient, decide and act. It's called OODA."

Based on President Ghani's view, Daesh poses further threats not only to Afghanistan but to the whole region. This anti-Iraq product which has infiltrated to Afghanistan will expand its realm of militancy to regional territories if an effective strategy does not be adopted forthwith to counter it. The world

must be on alert of the poison spew forth by the IS and have to stop this turbulence.

Talking about impacts of the military operation conducted by Pakistani military forces in Waziristan, Ghani said that the operation had displaced hundreds of militants which have impacted the security situation in Afghanistan. This comes when Afghan interior ministry said earlier that a large number of militants from Pakistan were joining Afghan Taliban's Spring Offensive.

Last Thursday, however, the Pakistan Foreign Office rejected the allegation about the influx of terrorists in Afghanistan from Pakistan and called for closer cooperation to deal with the issue of cross-border terrorism. Pakistan FO Spokesperson Tasnim Aslam denounced Taliban's Spring Offensive and emphasized on peace and reconciliation in war-ravaged Afghanistan.

Referring to the economic corridor, which Pakistan intends to build in cooperation with China, the spokesperson observed that peaceful neighborhood, particularly a peaceful Afghanistan, was necessary to fully benefit from the project that is being seen by many as a "game-changer" for the region.

She also reminded the Afghan government about the steps taken by Islamabad for improving bilateral relationship.

Ms. Aslam recalled the improved border coordination between Pakistan and Afghan security forces and the counter-terrorism operation (Zarb-i-Azb) that Pakistan started in last June.

She said it had been Pakistan's policy that no-one would be allowed to use its territory against Afghanistan and accordingly expected Kabul to reciprocate.

Reports show that frequency of militancy and terrorism has been increased in the New Year and in Afghanistan leading to great civilian casualties. In the first three months of 2015, civilian casualties from ground engagements rose by eight per cent compared to the same period in 2014. Ground fighting between pro-government forces and Taliban militants caused 521 civilian casualties, with 136 civilians killed and 385 injured - based on UNAMA's findings.

Nicholas Haysom, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, has said earlier that UNAMA was particularly concerned about the impact on civilians of further conflict-related operations by the Afghan National Security Forces and anti-government elements in the coming months.

After 31 passengers were abducted by the militants, their relatives and rights activists set up a protest camp in Zarnigar Park, not far from the Presidential Palace, as a last resort after multiple protests. More than two months has passed from this sit-in, but the demands were not met. Their families show deep concerns about the abduction of their bread-winners and urge Afghan officials to take note of their problems. Since insecurity and unemployment are the major challenges in Afghanistan, the victims' families are in dire need of bread and butter. I hope they have their demands met in near future.

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Workforce in Afghanistan!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

Mr. Sartaj is from Pakistan. Like thousands of other Pakistanis, he is also working in Kabul for almost two years now. He teaches Afghan children in an international school of the city. With his high academic qualification, vast experience in a number of international schools and his well-organized and effective teaching methods, he is equally liked and respected by the students and parents. With his background, he could have easily availed a better job in a foreign country but his case is slightly different from others who work in Afghanistan as they are well paid in Afghanistan comparing to their own country. Now, they have spent many years and they feel themselves a part of the society and country. Similarities between the two countries fill the gaps in few months and later on, they feel themselves absolutely comfortable in Afghanistan.

One of the workers from Pakistan says, "The biggest similarity we have is religion. We go to mosques and offer prayers together and it is an occasion when differences between Afghans and us become almost invisible. This is the true spirit of our religion that brings people together and removes the differences. Then there are large numbers of Afghans who have spent considerable time in Pakistan. They can speak our language, they also like Pakistani foods and tea and they have good memories from Pakistan. It is the reason why, we are greeted warmly whenever we meet anyone who has ever lived in Pakistan. Similarities in language also bring ease to us and our children and our children have smoothly got adjusted in the Afghan society."

However, this is only one side of the picture. On the other hand, they are sometimes teased by anti-Pakistan comments of people, bothered unnecessarily by police or security forces and they face organizational discrimination due to their background. In the words of Mr. Sartaj, "I feel myself more Indian than a Pakistani. We felt slightly uneasy when people asked about our country and we had to tell them that we belong to Pakistan. Later on, I found out that when I say that I am from India, I can be safer of the invisible discrimination of people."

Large numbers of foreigners, mostly Pakistanis are working in Kabul and other places of Afghanistan. They are mostly in technical or skilled jobs like teaching, engineering, construction, printing, and other fields where we don't have skilled workers of our own. Due to three decades of war and destruction and weak system of education, we don't have skilled labor of our own and rely on people from abroad and the most affordable and convenient ones come from Pakistan. Majority of our private university professors and schoolteachers belong to Pakistan as their academic qualification and skills meet the requirements of our schools and universities. In the field of construction, printing, electrical and mechanical engineering, road surveying and construction and

numerous other fields, we again look for foreign workforce due to inadequate supply of skilled workers from inside the country.

The present setup is smoothly working for both the countries. If foreigners are getting good salaries in our country, we are also filling the gap of lack of skilled labor. Both of them are indispensable and depend badly on each other.

However, from time to time, some politicians try to revitalize their political career complaining that presence of large numbers of foreigners have added to the worsening situation of unemployment in the country and all the foreign labor should leave the country so that more job opportunities should be created for the jobless Afghans. But this demand turns out to be hollow and baseless when we look at the ground realities. It is a fact that local labor is cheap and easy to hire but local labor is not skilled enough to meet the needs of the country. In such circumstances, hiring foreigners remains the only option to run the machinery of the country.

It becomes clear that the foreigners are in fact helping us running the mechanism of the country by filling the gaps that cannot be filled by our fellow citizens. All the foreigners deserve our respect, appreciation and due recognition of their services.

In regards of Pakistan, some points must also be kept in mind. The relations between the two countries are indispensable. We have the biggest local trade relations with Pakistan, thousands of Afghans go to Pakistan every month for medical treatment, trade and visiting their relatives. People on both the sides of border share relations and they have to cross the border to meet their relatives. It remains a fact that the Pakistani government might have done ill with Afghans by continuously interfering in their internal issues but it is also a fact that millions of Afghans who spent decades in Pakistan as refugees are happy of the Pakistani masses. Pakistani people treated them nicely and Afghans had complete freedom to buy property, travel to different places, get education and had equal access to all the civic facilities.

It must be kept in mind that Pakistan is our neighbor and we can only prosper if we try to keep good relations with our neighbors. On the other hand, a country like Afghanistan, which is dependent to other nations in its economy, defense and all other factors, can hardly afford to have any enemies and should make its goal to make more and more friends and supporters.

The strategy of President Ashraf Ghani is the most suitable who visited Pakistan in his first instance and made efforts that the relations between the two countries reached to the most favorable and elevated level in the history. Along with the government, it also becomes the responsibility of media and civil society to work to enhance the relations between the two countries. Such a strategy might or might not benefit Pakistan but it would definitely

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