

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



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Warring Parties Seek to Impede Democratization

The insurgent fighters have intensified their attacks to hamper democratic process in Afghanistan. The unmitigated insurgency slowed down registration process for district council and provincial elections, which has ushered in with the Taliban's spring offensive. The spate of suicide attacks in Kabul filled the air with fear and chagrin. The protracted war in Afghanistan has frustrated people, who have lost their confidence in National Unity Government (NUG) and its international allies. Despite the presence of NATO troops in the country for more than a decade, signing security pact with the US and establishing High Peace Council (HPC), Afghan nation is still bleeding in the wake of suicide bombings and terrorist attacks.

It is self-evident that nations have paid great sacrifices to achieve democracy; Afghans' sacrifices for four decades should not be underestimated, either. To view Afghanistan's history, millions of men and women were killed and amputated amidst war and violence. The post-Taliban Afghanistan - in which constitution was approved on the basis of democracy, presidential and provincial elections were held, and ethnic, religious and sexual discriminations were eliminated legally - was the last gleam of hope for Afghan nation to heave a sigh of relief under a democratic government. However, violence and bloodshed continue unabated. To put it succinctly, the Taliban's persistence on terrorist activities and the emergence of the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group have remained obstacles before democracy and peace.

The issue of terrorism was debated hotly at national and international levels; nonetheless, there was no concrete solution to it so far. Neither Kabul government nor its international allies could persuade the Taliban to hold peace talks. Thus, the cul-de-sac of talks remains unbreakable.

Terrorism is a global issue and many nations suffered or being suffering from it. For example, the foundation of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) in 1976 in northeast Sri Lanka led to heavy casualties in this country. LTTE is believed to be the strongest terrorist group in the world which assassinated high-profile officials and invented suicide belts. Unsuccessful peace talks were held between Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. After the breakdown of the peace process in 2006, the Sri Lankan military launched a major offensive against the LTTE which led to the disintegration of this terrorist group. Sri Lankan government declared victory over LTTE on 16 May 2009 and killed its leader Prabhakaran three days after the victory.

Cambodia was also beset by civil war and terrorist activities for three decades. The Taliban's regime was similar to Khmer Rouge which carried out genocide in Cambodia. Very akin to the Taliban's regime - which captured Kabul in 1996 with mouth-watering promises to the public - the Kmer Rouge captured Cambodian capital in 1975. Then it resorted to genocide and killed its opponents in large number as the Taliban did in Afghanistan. That is to say, Khmer Rouge practiced upon radical ideology in Cambodia as the Taliban did in Afghanistan. For instance, anyone thought to be an intellectual of any sort was killed. People were often condemned for wearing glasses or knowing a foreign language. After the downfall of its regime in 1979 in light of Vietnam's invasion, members of the Khmer Rouge fled to Thailand. They continued their insurgency in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge guerilla party participated in the 1991 United Nations brokered peace process, but broke off just before the 1993 election and resumed armed conflict. But they officially surrendered themselves in the amnesty of Cambodian government in late 1999 and was dissolved in its army. Thus, Khmer Rouge guerilla fighters stopped militancy and joined peace process.

However, the Taliban have constantly held out against peace talks and still continue their insurgency killing soldiers and civilians without an iota of mercy. It should be noted that the Taliban and Khmer Rouge are different in nature. The Taliban are a terrorist group and will not hold negotiation; whereas Khmer Rouge was a communist political party and, in turn, joined Cambodia's peace process. In such a case, the Taliban should be doomed to the fate of LTTE.

The decades of war in Cambodia and years of terrorist activities in Sri Lanka point out the fact that peace and stability cannot be granted. It needs to be earned. Within its four-year regime, Khmer Rouge killed between one to two million people in Cambodia, which is highly shocking.

Suffering decades of war and violence, Afghans will have to fight for democracy and their human rights. If people simply do not register for forthcoming election, it will be a strong blow to the sacrifices made up to now. To value the drops of blood shed for rights and freedoms and for democracy, Afghan men and women should participate in the upcoming election to strengthen the process of democratization.



Poverty Rising in Afghanistan

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

As the country is grinding at war with international terrorists organizations since last one and half decade, Afghanistan government is yet to come up with a war strategy directed at types, styles and tactics used by these terrorists. Though the present army and police forces are relatively new, and established during the ongoing war on terror, the onus of responsibility for their training, modus operandi of operations, directions and setting objectives still lies on the shoulders of government leadership and senior military and police officers. Today's warfare tactics are no secret as countries in this region in particular and around the world in general have already experienced these types of wars during last 50 years. Examples of these countries include Sri Lanka, Tamil Tigers had waged insurgent war against central government for forty years until they were defeated in 2009, India continues to tackle insurgent war in its Assam, Punjab, Kashmir and other provinces, Colombia has grappled with very much the same kind of war with FARC insurgents for fifty years. United Kingdom was struggling at war with Irish insurgents for more than a decade. Experience of these countries and set of knowledge built up during their struggle to quell insurgents can be of tremendous help in imparting specialized fighting skills, reconnaissance, intelligence skills and observation and identification tactics, which are critically important for a police force engaged at war with ideological insurgents and terrorist organizations.

Police is a soft arm of the State, primarily for internal security. It is the only state institution allowed to use force in peace times. Police is accountable to criminal justice system, community and government through established mechanisms. But police force in Afghanistan lacks credible accountability system in place. In addition they do not have well established mechanism of operations involving different level of policing activities, and priorities. This is one of the most important reasons that duties of army and police are mixed up, although they are different in their doctrines with some degree of operational overlapping depending on circumstances. Unless these two organizations are segregated in terms of duties by installing doctrines and appropriate structures of command and control and accountability, Afghanistan will continue to struggle and can suffer more casualties in the ongoing war on terror. Military should largely be accountable to the state and its government, and police institutions should be accountable to justice system, government and community. Military always follows the principles of proportionality of targets, and deploys force to destroy targets with less restriction on the quantum of force. Proportionality of force is the fundamental principle of police and hence, its use is incrementally successive and proportional to threats. Military actions may not follow activation of criminal justice system, but police actions are entailed with criminal justice system and appropriate accountability mechanisms. These mechanisms harmonize the needs of the government and the communities with judicial oversight. Other areas for improvement include proper investigation after occurrence of incidence. There have been many clues for classical and forensic investigations at bombing and suicide sites, but these clues are seldom exploited fully. The persons who had committed suicide and had died in the act, are not investigated thoroughly. Accepted norms should be to take the body, carry out judicial autopsy and identify the body through investigative clues. There are chances that important clues could emerge for obtaining links that can lead to center and support of the network dispatching these suicide idiots for attacks.

Ministry of Interior should field highly trained police officers and personnel to the field for patrol round the clock in major city centers and to areas crowded with high density of population. These police contingents should be part of a strategy that should include cooperation of people in the area, use of technology such as security cameras, metal explosive identifying tools, detective tools, behavioral psychology, checkpoints and a network

of spies and observers throughout population centers. This mechanism should be duplicated and put in place in major cities and districts. Police in metropolitan cities including in Delhi trained police personnel to eye contact, watch for behavior and non verbal symptoms of individuals on the streets and observe activities of people appearing strange in their behavior, which had paid big dividends in bringing relative reduction in the beginning and complete elimination of bombing incidents. Police also sensitized people to observe symptoms with massive campaigns. In addition, police behavior with general public and their treatment of people should be characterized in the framework of high morale and civilized manners. As mentioned above, police is the soft arm of government and any mistreatment on the part of police of general public can backfire severely - especially in societies where insurgents and terrorist groups are working hard to conscript fighters in their ranks. Bad manners and mishandling of general public by police and other security and government officials can backfire severely.

International community including United Nations and other friendly countries, mainly the United States of America, has undertaken huge training programs for Afghanistan police force. Billions of US dollars have been expended in the form of contract awards to DynCorp International, a US firm to train Afghan police force. But these training programs were devised and undertaken in the form spasmodic response to the changes that would occur in US policy about their Afghanistan intervention and mostly these were military led, more trained in militaristic role and doctrine. There was no long-term strategy and research on the ground as to in what framework should the training begin, and what kind of training was needed for the police force to face aggressive attacks by an entrenched insurgency and other terrorist groups. Police and army institutions were embarked almost in identical duties - engaged with enemy at front lines? Highly costly workshops and training sessions were being organized for police officers and personnel at hotels and other expensive commercial buildings in civil areas, which have proved to have had no impact on the level of knowledge and skills of police personnel. These programs suffer with ad hocism without adequate attention to sustainability, continuous delivery and operational necessities. Instead, most drastic ways to organize training sessions should have been taking place inside the police institutions in the halls and training camps, and these could be organized by police trainers from neighboring countries police institutions. This could have left long lasting impact on the training, which could have provided opportunities for our officers to established working relationships with police officers of these friendly, neighboring countries for afterward follow-up on certain professional matters. In the wake of almost daily fatal terrorist incidents in the country, leadership of the two large security institutions i.e. Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior, should work together to address these issues. It is imperative to overhaul operations, command and control structure and modus operandi of the two forces' conducts and effectiveness in the field. Though it might seem unrealistic to completely pull out police force from Insurgency battle fields, Ministry of Interior should plan for this to happen. One solution could be to recruit local militia under direct control and command of Ministry of Interior, which can replace police force fighting along with army personnel at frontlines. Policing of society in its proper manner can earn support from general public. Much of the ongoing incidents of suicide bombings, road side bombing and other types of terrorist attacks can be reduced, which will translate into a more sanguine city life, increased commercial activities and investment. A strong, skillful and knowledgeable police and judicial institutions can evaporate any and all support for insurgency among populations, and people will gather around their legitimate government. *Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammadzahirakbari@gmail.com*

Playing US sanctions: China walks a fine line in Iran

By James M. Dorsey

Chinese businessman Sheng Kuan Li didn't worry about sanctions when he decided in 2010 to invest \$200 million in a steel mill in Iran that started producing ingots and billet within months of the lifting of punitive measures against the Islamic republic as part of 2015 international nuclear agreement with Iran.

With no operations in the United States, Mr. Li was not concerned about being targeted by the US Treasury. Mr. Li, moreover, circumvented financial restrictions on Iran by funding his investment through what he called a "private transfer," a money swap that was based on trust and avoided regular banking channels. In doing so, Mr. Li was following standard Chinese practice of evading the sanctions regime by using alternative routes or establishing alternative institutions that were in effect immune.

To be able to continue to purchase Iranian oil while sanctions were in place, China, for example, established the Bank of Kunlun to handle Chinese payments. The Chinese experience in circumventing the earlier sanctions will come in handy with Beijing rejecting US President Donald J. Trump's renewed effort to isolate Iran and force it to make further concessions on its nuclear and ballistic missiles programs as well as the Islamic republic's regional role in the Middle East by walking away from the 2015 agreement and reintroducing punitive economic measures.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said in response to Mr. Trump's announcement that the People's Republic was committed to the deal and would "maintain communication with all parties and continue to protect and execute the agreement fully."

China's likely willingness to circumvent US sanctions is one factor that will influence Iran's decision on whether it will stick to the agreement. Iran's decision depends on the readiness and ability of the other signatories - Britain, France, Germany and Russia - to also stand up to the United States.

China's experience in circumventing sanctions could come in handy as Europe, that like China has rejected Mr. Trump's move and vowed to ignore the sanctions, weighs ways of putting its money where its mouth is by attempting to shield European companies from potential US punitive action. One possibility would be to use alternative Chinese financial networks.

Nonetheless, this time round, rejecting and violating US sanctions may prove for China as well as the other signatories to be a trickier undertaking. Last time round, China and the other signatories were part of an international consensus that aimed to force Iran to accept restrictions on Iran's nuclear program even if they at times circumvented the sanctions.

China and other signatories are in the wake of the re-imposition of US sanctions likely to be operating in a far more confrontational environment in which the subtext of Mr. Trump's decision as well the positions of Saudi Arabia and Israel appears to be a policy that seeks to achieve regime change in Tehran. Saudi Arabia as well as the United Arab Emirates have suggested in recent months in their 11-month old economic and diplomatic boycott of Qatar that they are willing to quietly sanction those who fail to support them. There is little reason to doubt that they would do the same in their confrontation with Iran with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman describing the dispute with Qatar as "trivial" in comparison to the kingdom's existential

battle with Iran. Saudi Arabia demonstrated its greater assertiveness by forcing major multi-national financial institutions to choose sides in the Gulf spat. In response to Saudi pressure, JP Morgan and HSBC last month walked away from participating in a \$12 billion bond sale.

Earlier, Doha Bank, Qatar's fifth-biggest lender, was forced to reduce the size of a two-year, \$575 million bank loan that it had raised in December 2015 to \$400 million, when it sought a one-year extension of the facility because Chinese, Hong Kong and Japanese banks opted not to participate. In the utmost consequence, China's concerted effort to remain aloof of the Middle East's multiple conflicts could be severely compromised if it were forced to take sides in a conflict between Iran, a country with which China feels that it has much in common and that it in the past has helped develop its ballistic and nuclear programs, and Saudi Arabia, a more recently found friend that is economically important to the People's Republic.

To be sure, greater Saudi assertiveness does not mean that the kingdom does not have to tread carefully in potentially seeking to penalize China and others for their potential refusal to go along with Mr. Trump's confronting of Iran. Saudi Arabia desperately needs foreign investment to implement Prince Mohammed's Vision 2030, a far-reaching plan for social and economic reform that aims to diversify the kingdom's conservative society and oil-dependent economy and turn it into a 21st century, knowledge-based state.

China, moreover, is one of Saudi Arabia's foremost oil export markets. While the Saudi military remains focussed on US and European arms purchases, China, at a time that a military confrontation with Iran is not beyond the realm of the possible, is a source of weaponry the United States has been so far unwilling to sell to the kingdom.

With the United States refusing to share its most advanced drone technology, China agreed last year to open its first overseas defense production facility in Saudi Arabia. State-owned China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC) will manufacture its CH-4 Caihong, or Rainbow drone as well as associated equipment in Saudi Arabia. The CH-4 is comparable to the US armed MQ-9 Reaper drone. The stakes in the battle to save the Iranian nuclear deal in the wake of Mr. Trump's decision go however far beyond a belief that the nuclear deal is serving its purpose in curbing potential Iranian nuclear ambitions and economic opportunity. Leveraging its experience, an effort by China together with Russia and Europe that keeps the Iranian nuclear deal in place and thwarts US sanctions would deliver one of the heaviest body blows to US credibility and perceptions of US power since Mr. Trump came to office in January of last year. Said a Middle Eastern diplomat: "A successful countering of US sanctions would demonstrate beyond doubt limits to America's ability to impose its will. That would have wide-reaching consequences, not in the least question marks in Saudi Arabia and Israel on the degree to which they can risk continuing putting most of their eggs in Washington's basket."

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