

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



May 18, 2015

## Soaring Insecurity Vs Government Strategy

The brutality seems to have chain up unto complete annihilation of innocence –observing calm and indifferent to entire scenario. This is eventually referred to be era of vindictiveness –exploits the essence of development for peace that has turned a nightmare. The strength the anti-state elements have acquired marks the state of mercifulness we display –we are divided they are united. At present the insurgents have turned united, that only let them, wreak havoc on ordinary masses. In the wake of pronounced spring offensive the foreign diplomats, public officials and civilian are left render the pay of decade long war. The growing attacks on foreign and civilians indicates the insurgents are underlining their pretentious presence. Earlier, two successive blasts and associated casualties rocked Kabul city.

It was Sunday's unfortunate morning when a suicide car went off close to the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul that claimed lives of at least three people, injuring 18 others. According to a Ministry of Interior spokesman Sediq Sediqqi, two women were among the dead and among the injured were eight women and three children. Later, European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) in Afghanistan has confirmed the death of one of their contract workers. The blast took place during rush hour in a densely populated area and inflicted severe damage to vehicles and buildings in the neighborhood. It was the second blast of the day. The first blast had occurred due to IED explosion on Saturday night at the University of Kabul that injured two lecturers. This depicts state of soaring insecurity. The Taliban has claimed responsibility for the fatal bombing. The militants have already stepped up attacks on government and foreign targets in recent weeks, taking a heavy toll on civilians and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The insurgent group has already vowed of nationwide attacks in what is expected to be the bloodiest spring offensive in a decade as NATO forces pull back from the frontlines. Who shall be targeted is clarified in their statements, "The main targets of these operations... will be the foreign occupiers, especially their permanent military bases... officials of the stooge regime, their military constellations, especially their intelligence, interior ministry and defense ministry officials."

The worsened condition of law and order and frequent activities of ISIS and Taliban reflects as if insurgents are running a parallel government. On the other hand the former arbitrary release of large number of Taliban inmates seems to be strengthening their might and they are signaling their presence by carrying out attacks. What is clear is that the insurgents are expanding the range of their operations. The insurgents are operating at will and quite rapidly expanding operations to parts of the country where it previously appeared to have little ability to act. It also seems that the militants are familiar with important installations, and their attacks are meticulously staged. If a wise and coordinated strategy is not pursued then control over eastern and southern Afghanistan might slip into the hands of the Taliban with no apparent ability to foil this, post US pull out. The escalating violence across the country also sparks the concern over how the 350,000-strong Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will be able to manage once foreign troops withdraw by 2014.

It depicts Taliban are definitely keeping their proclamation and pursuing their target. Nevertheless, the government necessary preparation and a coordinated joint effort to be taken seem non-existent. Despite state's security apparatus tried its best foiling the attack to a greater extent on many occasions –the non-providence of necessary information about the Taliban's advances is a clear reflection of loopholes in security institutions.

The consecutive attacks mark that Taliban has ignored the call for peace talk and instead officially launched their spring fighting offensive – expanding their battle to the northern parts of the country. One of strategy the government can put to exercise is building broader consensus against them to be excommunicated. Formerly, a number of religious scholars in Kabul expressed their support for recent statements made by clerics in the holy city of Mecca, condemning Daesh and the Taliban as deviants from Islam and calling on all true Muslims to stand against them. The prominent scholar, Al-Ghamedi had said that both Daesh and Taliban have killed people in the name of Islam, but in fact have no connection to the true religion.

This statement came at very critical time when the entire world is facing the threats from renowned terrorists of Daesh and Taliban. Both Muslim and non-Muslim world are rendered vulnerable to attacks of these terrorists. The absence of trust and coordination between most of countries has let these terrorists invincible. Nonetheless, the broader system of cooperation between security institutions, intelligence agencies and fair prosecution system, the government may cop with the challenge of multiplying insecurity. The militants apprehended must be subjected to a fair trial is a pivotal to maintenance of peace and security.

Long lasting peace can only be installed in Afghanistan provided the anti-state elements are brought to book through fair trial, holding the right culprit accountable for his deeds. In doing so the government should too consider the wages and authority of public officials serving this department, so that they should not be misled by attractive offers. The government must get itself cleared, whom to be labeled as terrorists, whom should be talked to and whom shouldn't? it should be learned that both the formation of fair laws, its implementation and regulation makes it possible for men to live together peaceably.



## Land Grabbing; A Complicated Story!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

The resultant complications of land grabbing are slowly coming to the surface and are adding to the miseries of the middle and lower classes that spent the saving of their lives to buy a small piece of land. Although much has been written in these lines against land grabbing but nothing useful and productive has been done to solve this problem and if the trend persisted, the resultant complications will keep tormenting us from time to time. There are reports of some land grabbers who first grabbed the land of government and then sold it to others. This chain reaction continued until the land was divided into small pieces and a member of lower or middle class combined all his savings and purchased the one piece of this land. Now that government wants to take action, the poor owner of the land becomes the victim and government comes under criticism.

Land grabbing is not a new story for Afghanistan. In the last three decades, those influential who controlled an area also owned all the land and took it as granted to divide the land among his relatives or friends. After the restoration of democracy, when the value of property skyrocketed, bazaar of land grabbing also heated up. Strong and influential ministers, top brasses of military, tribal chiefs, top government officials and their relatives had all the power and opportunity to grab the land of government and weak public. The trend continues as the government is also in their hand and they cannot be stopped by anyone. Trend will stop only if there remains no more land to be grabbed. Majority of this grabbed land was later on sold to others and it changed many hands before it reached to the final customer. In Kabul, there are many housing schemes established on a grabbed land. On grabbed land, blocks of apartments have been built and are sold to people on reasonable conditions. These small apartments are reasonable enough to be purchased by members of lower and middle class as well. But for making this happen, they must bring together all their savings.

Land grabbing also gave birth to many complications in the society. Due to this, large number of people accumulated unbelievable treasures of money in a short period. This illegal money then became a reason for many other social evils. This money gave them unlimited powers to grab more land, carry out illegal activities, have their own thugs and in some cases, their own private army and even challenge the writ of the government. Socially, it brought much differences between the upper and middle classes of the society. The rich class got very rich while the middle and lower class remained the same, resulting in the frustration among the members of middle and lower classes. It also gave rise to increased desire of money in the society and made people more materialistic. This mentality gave a good reason for the existence and promotion of corruption in the society. It is unfortunate that corruption is not considered wrong in our society and there is a saying that, 'If you have the opportunity, you should try to eat because if you do not do so, others will eat it.' This mindset has shaken the basis of our society and we can no more claim to be an honest nation. We only keep away from corruption when we are afraid of police or when we do not have any chance of doing any corruption.

It also gave rise to a general mindset that laws can be broken and the

guardians of law have a price tag on them. It is the reason that we are in habit of giving and accepting bribe and corruption and trend of bribing has penetrated deep into our social and political roots. This is such a dangerous problem that all the efforts of government to stop corruption failed and we wasted billions of dollars of international community that came to country after the restoration of democracy. This money was meant for the improvement of the country but instead, it brought surprising improvement in the conditions of a few.

The difference between different groups of society also gave rise to differences in their thoughts. The lower and middle class consider the upper class responsible for all their miseries. In a sense, these two groups hate each other and we can say that the country is already divided on the ideological grounds.

Let us not forget to mention here another unique form of land grabbing. Governor of a province is well reputed for his unique tactics of land grabbing. In his province, if a person wants to start a business or owns a big property, he has to accept any one of the two conditions presented to him by the said governor. He has to make the governor his partner in his business or property or he has to pay a considerable share in his profit. If a person refuses to accept either of them, he becomes a victim of harassment, torture, legal cases and complications and other illegal tactics that make him either accept the conditions or leave the province. There are also reports that the said governor has grabbed property of large number of people in the province. If he ever likes any property in any part of the province, the property owner is forced to sell this property on the terms suitable for the governor.

In the whole story of land grabbing, the role of concerned government authorities has been really poor and unsatisfactory. A land cannot be grabbed until the local government authorities do not have their own share in the whole process.

Issuing fake documents, disappearances of old and genuine land papers and other illegal practices cannot be carried out without the cooperation and support of concerned officials. It simply means, government needs to tackle the government officials first if it has to end this problem.

In a number of countries of the world, this issue has been resolved in a unique manner. When government tries to catch and try the land grabbers, they try their best to keep out of court and prison and save their so-called social status and reputation. In return, they offer government large sums of money to bargain and finish the case out of the court and in an indirect way, government earns billions of dollars by threatening the land-grabbers. But for this to happen, government needs to take a firm stance. Without any discrimination of strong or weak, government must take action against all of them and bring them to justice. The work may be difficult in the beginning, but if the government took a firm stance and gave a message to criminals, hardly any would dare to get into a conflict with the government. In the same way, actual and original criminals should be caught instead of those who also became the victims of land-grabbers.

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## Peace Prospect in Context of the Bloody Spring Fight

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

The Taliban's bloody spring offensive has sparked fears about the peace talks with the Taliban. Instead of drumming up for resumption of peace negotiations, now all sides have set eyes on the development of the war events in the country. Some months ago, there were optimism for resumption of peace negotiations aimed at reaching a peace deal with the Taliban. Also the rare peace discussions between Taliban delegation and representatives of the Afghan government in Qatar were a clear sign of the Taliban's willingness for entering negotiations with the government of Afghanistan. The government of Afghanistan hoped to be able to start formal talks with Taliban representatives immediately, and the Afghan officials had indicated of start of peace talks within weeks.

However, the resurgence of the Taliban and the expanding war is virtually meaning less chances of successful resumption of formal talks in near future. The militant groups have launched a deadly campaign in many provinces and the war against the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is expanding. In at least ten provinces, the ANSF are engaged in fierce battles with the militant groups. The casualties of the Taliban fighting on the ground are phenomenal, the reports say. According to NATO officials in Afghanistan, the ANSF casualties have also raised sharply compared to the same period last year. In absence of the US-led NATO forces, an even bitter summer campaign is awaiting the country as the militant groups are struggling to have gains on the ground.

The Taliban have been able this year to expand the war fronts in different corners of the country. However, the Afghan army and police have been fighting quite efficiently against the militants' offensive depriving the Taliban of taking grounds. Despite the fierce fighting the Taliban have not been able to take any strategic areas or key districts during this year's spring offensive. The Taliban's major objective in this bitter campaign is to take grounds particularly districts in key provinces to set up another front against the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). In fact, the fight for the Taliban is a test of their ability for taking ground and obtaining substantial gains before any kind of peace talks with the government of Afghanistan. The ANSF have been able so far to keep the Taliban at bay and prevent them from considerable successes on the ground.

Taking ground would be a considerable leverage for the Taliban on table of peace negotiations. Many evidences suggested in recent months that the Taliban were preparing for peace talks with the government of Afghanistan. However, now the expanding war is meaning that the group is testing its last-ditch campaign in hopes of some remarkable gains against the ANSF so to use it in bargaining terms of a peace deal with the government. If the Taliban fails to have any considerable gains from their ongoing bloody campaign, it will be a major boost for the government of Afghanistan as it will have the upper hand in talks and will be better positioned to convince the Taliban that they have no chance of military victory on the ground and had better to end the conflict through a peaceful settlement.

Despite no considerable victory for the Taliban so far, there potential risk of the militant groups making some gains against an army and police forces who have shouldered the burden of the war this year alone. As the NATO has ended its long-run battle against the Taliban, the ANSF are now battling the insurgency without any considerable assistance in forms of air support, logistics or intelligence. This has put considerable pressures on the ANSF this year making them extremely vulnerable to the new phase of the war. The Taliban have already expanded the war and opened new fronts in once relatively stable provinces. The expansion of the war is straining ability of the ANSF, and it is feared it gets overwhelmed in a heightened anti-insurgency campaign in the coming months and years.

The Taliban spring offensive is not a good sign for the efforts to kick-start peace negotiations with the Taliban. With the expanding war the hopes for peace is faltering. The expanding war is virtually dooming away the understandings achieved between the two sides so far and the mediations of other involved parties. The government of Afghanistan spent months in heightened diplomatic efforts to prepare the ground for peace negotiations. The efforts yielded tangible results as many of the major players of the conflict in Afghanistan pledged the Afghan government to fully back its peace efforts aimed at ending the conflict. Including among them was Pakistan and China who is believed to play remarkable roles in helping the government of Afghanistan to persuade the Taliban for a peace settlement.

However, now there also seems to be problems on the political front. Pakistan, who is believed to have the ultimate influence on the Taliban leadership, has again raised concerns for Indian role in Afghanistan. Pakistan has long been demanding Pakistani Taliban leader Mullah Fazlullah who Islamabad says is operating in eastern Afghanistan. This is while the Afghan government maintains that it will not allow any actors to operate against Pakistan's interests from the Afghan soil. Any such differences or lack of understandings between Afghanistan and Pakistan would harm peace and stability in both countries particularly the peace efforts in Afghanistan. It took a long time for Kabul and Islamabad to overcome mistrusts and rapidly develop mutual relations focused on peace efforts. For peace and economic development in both countries, Islamabad and Kabul have no choice but to overcome existing problems and start a new era of cooperation.

On the war ground, there is no alternative for the government of Afghanistan to defeat the militant groups militarily in the first hand, and then start negotiations with them. Any major ground victory for the Taliban will ruin the prospect of any peace with the insurgent groups. Therefore, the government needs to wage a ruthless war against the insurgents to convince them that table of negotiations is the only viable option for ending the conflict in the country.

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