

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



May 21, 2017

## Shaky Situation in Afghanistan

The opinions of the people and intellectuals towards the socio-political scenario in Afghanistan appear to be divergent and there are not clear certainties in this regard. There are many doubts and the opinions regarding the situation are very shaky. It is not just about the situation in Afghanistan, but the reaction by the Afghan authorities as a response to the situation is also doubtful.

Especially, in the last some months the situation seems ambiguous as to where the country is leading and what would be the future of socio-political scenario in the region. Though, since the downfall of Taliban there have been major contributions on the part of international community to help our country out of instability and in that regard billion of dollars have moved in, especially from U.S., the major issues still remain with major concerns. There are many serious minds that doubt the future of the peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

Afghanistan has seen many decades of wars, including both international and civil wars. The people in the country have been seeking a period of stability wherein they get opportunities of development and progress. They have gone through the severest kind of agony and have experienced the worst kind of economic, social and political crisis. There have been hopes lately that country would move towards prosperity, but these hopes are being challenged now in the ongoing period of transition. After more than 14 years of war and movement against terrorism, though there have been improvements, the administrative, development and security sectors still remain immature. It is comprehensible that these sectors take long time for their improvement, but the level of the improvement so far made is not in accordance to the energy and resources being utilized. One of the biggest hurdles in this regard has been the lack of transparency in the utilization of the resources, mostly provided as aid by the international community. The wave of corruption has uprooted the weak foundations of the development projects and possibilities of better outcomes have diminished to a great extent.

There are three basic sectors which require special attention. They include incapacity of the government to provide good governance. Good governance relates to the conduct of the public institutions regarding the public affairs in such a way so as to guarantee well being, prosperity and definitely human rights. But instead our public institutions have been dominated by incapacity and corruption. These institutions have been further adding to the troubles of the common people instead of solving their problems. They have been vehemently dominated by the individuals in authority. The institutionalization process has been very weak and institutions serve the authoritative people on the top of bureaucratic hierarchy.

The real purpose of a democratic system is to reach to the common people of the society and provide them facilities on their door steps. Further, the so called democratic system in our country has not been able to represent the people of Afghanistan as a whole. The diverse Afghan society has not been able to be compensated in the system that has been trying to keep the central government stronger. Even the key institutions like legislature, judiciary and executive have not risen to the task. They, instead of serving the country, seem to be fanning the flames of controversies. The government that should be the leading force towards a democratic setup, itself seems to be running after authority, not democratic principles. The parliament, which represents the elected members, is not given its due authority.

As far as the security of the country is concerned, there have been many improvements but a lot of work still needs to be done. The international security forces have withdrawn and the responsibilities of security are on the shoulders of Afghan security forces. As far as the capacity of Afghan forces to guarantee secure life for Afghan people is concerned, there are grey patches. Unless there are speedy development in the capacity building, training and professionalism of Afghan forces, the eyebrows will remain tense as far as security arrangements are concerned.

Further, the political reconciliation with Taliban that is expected to find out some political solution to the issues in the country in order to lead to peace is also suffering from lack of clarity and commitment.

On the other hand, Taliban leadership has not shown readiness for the peace process. In addition, the factions existing within Taliban also differ in their views regarding any peace deal and this makes the process difficult by introducing the intricacy as to whether which faction should be considered as the true representative to Taliban, and what should be done with the other factions who opt to go against any sort of peace process.

The impact of international assistance will remain limited unless donors devise better mechanisms to monitor implementation, adequately address corruption and wastage of aid funds. In order to address the socio-political and security concerns appropriately there has to be immense effort made on the part of government and other authoritative institutions in the country. Above all, this effort should be directed towards the wellbeing of all the people of Afghanistan.



## Solution to Insurgency

By Hujjatullah Zia

The widespread violence in Afghanistan fills the air with a sense of disappointment. The graph of casualty remains high and there is no remedy for the bleeding wound of Afghan nation. The deadly game of terrorist networks, supported by mysterious hand, never comes to an end. Afghans' sufferings continue unabated. Life is indescribably cheap and human rights are flagrantly violated as a result of war. More than a decade has passed from the conflict; however, the main reason behind this fighting still remains a mystery.

There are three main reasons regarding the war carried out by the militants: First, it is believed that warring parties are constituted of a number of ideologues. Their ideology tends to be very violent for rooting in fundamentalism. For instance, some warring parties, mainly the Taliban, claimed to establish the divine rule on the surface of earth.

According to them, Muslims have deviated from the right path and non-Muslims are already infidels.

Therefore, shedding the blood of both the groups would be allowed. On the other hand, political figures claim that ideology - which is tinged with harsh and burning emotions and revolutionary spirit - will cool down and its revolutionary nature will change into institution with the passage of time. But this fact has not been proved with the militants' ideology.

They seek to tailor people's beliefs and religious attitudes, from all walks of life, according to their own beliefs and warped minds - this is not possible and the only choice left for the militants will be killing any groups.

Second, it is believed that a number of individuals join militants so as to alleviate their financial pressure. This group does not care about ideology but paid to fight (mercenary fighters) and which is why the bulk of militants are formed by villagers who are deprived of social welfare.

Third, some adventurous people, such as cowboys, show tendency towards militancy for no reason other than adventure - perhaps they are the most dangerous group and nothing - including moral values, religious beliefs, human's life and dignity - will be sacred for them. It is most likely that almost all warring parties, including the Taliban, are constituted of all these three groups.

However, it is hard to figure out which of the three said groups will form the bulk of the Taliban's outfit. It seems that the Taliban do not fight for faith and beliefs. For instance, the clergy and great clerics called the Taliban's war illegitimate from religious perspective and constantly condemned their acts. The Taliban fighters kill men, women and children indiscriminately, which is a big sin in Islam. The Ulema's fatwa did not bear the desired result. To one's

unmitigated chagrin, clerics are also targeted by the Taliban. Recently, Afghan President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani called the clergy to facilitate peace talks, but this will not work out either. Perhaps, only the ideologues who claim to fight for protecting religious beliefs will show a little tendency towards the clergy's peace offering not the mercenary and adventuresome fighters.

Now the question - which has remained unanswered for more than a decade - is that what is the concrete solution to this problem?

It is beyond doubt that both counterinsurgency and peace process came to stalemate and no one could break the deadlock. The Taliban capitalized on the peace negotiation as some of their prisoners were released during Hamid Karzai's administration. Karzai showed great patience towards them calling them "discontented brothers" but they never acceded to the call for peace.

I agree with the maxim "if you want peace, prepare for war". The strategy of war should be changed in Afghanistan, however. Most probably, if people are not involved in supporting the soldiers, the same trend will continue.

In other words, tribal elders and residents must report the weakness of the militants and give information to the government about the fighters' havens and strongholds.

Since locals are more aware about the war zone and number of fighters in their areas, they will have to provide all the necessary information to soldiers. It is the people's responsibility to help the government so as to have their own rights and freedoms protected.

In addition, the government must strengthen the intelligence. The deadly attacks in Sardar Daud Khan's Hospital in Kabul and in Mazar-e-Sharif could be foiled if Afghanistan had strong intelligence service. Furthermore, the state will have to reinforce the border security.

A porous border will certainly constitute a serious threat to citizens' life. Last but not the least is eradicating the poppy cultivation. The government must find out the farmers and land-owners who cultivate opium and prosecute them fairly since the Taliban are benefitted from their cultivation. To sum up, warring factions will not hold negotiation with Afghan government which has been proved within last years. Continuing the war on terror seems to be the only choice before the government.

When a mechanism fails to bear the desired result, the government should change the war strategy with the support of Afghan and foreign generals. The aforementioned suggestions will work out if they are applied strictly. So, peace will be provided if a country is strong not only militarily but from different aspects.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia\_hujjat@yahoo.com

## The White House Crack-Up

By Elizabeth Drew

On both sides of the White House fence, near-nervous breakdowns abound. The White House staff is said to be in a state of near collapse - bouncing from one presidential crisis to another, trying all the while to hide from a screaming president. On the other side of the White House fence, much of Washington watches the disintegration of a presidency, and even Democrats aren't taking much joy in it. A president seemingly out of control makes any thoughtful citizen uneasy at best.

Reliable reports emanating from the White House indicate that the president spends much of his day watching television news and raging at what he sees (with one exception: Fox News) and at aides for allowing such reports to happen. Aides try to avoid bringing him bad news for fear of being yelled at.

The appointment of special counsel Robert Mueller by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein (who had his own reputation to rescue) won't do much for President Donald Trump's mood. Mueller, a widely respected former FBI director, will keep alive for some time the investigation into whether Trump's campaign or political associates colluded with Russia in its effort to elect Trump. It is a question that clearly drives Trump to distraction - and he dare not try to fire Mueller. But if, as Rosenstein's announcement said, Mueller is limited to investigating "federal crimes," broader issues will escape examination. There are impeachable offenses that aren't crimes.

Indeed, the latest bout of turmoil began with Trump's sudden firing on May 9 of FBI director James Comey. That move startled so many people in and out of the White House because it seemed to come out of nowhere, and there was no good explanation for it. The first official rationale for Comey's dismissal lasted all of two days. Trump's aides claimed that he was acting on a memo from Rosenstein, who set forth his deep concerns over how Comey had handled the inquiry into Hillary Clinton's maintenance of a private email server. But then Trump himself told NBC's Lester Holt that he'd fired Comey because of "this Russia thing."

In this rare snippet of honesty - that he had hoped firing Comey would head off an investigation into collusion - Trump may have admitted to obstruction of justice. Such obstruction was one of the charges pending against Richard Nixon when he resigned, rather than face certain impeachment in the House and conviction by the Senate.

Trump's stunning miscalculations - the naive belief that he could kill off the investigation, or that the Democrats would welcome his act because they were still angry at Comey for how he had treated Clinton - provided insight into his appalling judgment.

Adding to a possible obstruction charge was the staggering revelation on Tuesday of this week that, in mid-February, on the day after Trump fired his national security adviser, Michael Flynn, he asked Comey to call off the FBI's investigation of Flynn. (The criteria for impeachment on grounds of ob-

struction are not exactly the same as they are under criminal law.) From the moment he fired Flynn, Trump has behaved as if he fears that Flynn has incriminating information that he might be able to trade to avoid punishment for improperly accepting and failing to disclose payments from the governments of Russia and Turkey.

Another form of trouble for Trump had already come on Monday afternoon, when the Washington Post reported that he had disclosed highly classified information provided by a US ally (Israel, it turned out) to two senior Russian officials. That Oval Office meeting, held at the behest of Russian President Vladimir Putin, included the Russian foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, and Russia's ambassador to the US, Sergey Kislyak (whose telephone conversations with Flynn led to Flynn's downfall in February). While Trump's disclosure may not have been illegal - the president is entitled to declassify just about anything - it violated crucial intelligence-sharing norms.

What all of this means for Trump's longevity in office is now the most hotly debated topic in Washington. Even before these latest troubling stories broke, a large number of congressional Republicans viewed Trump as a threat to the country and their party. And while Republican leaders, thinking that tax cuts take priority, are not ready to say aloud that they would be happy to see Trump gone, they have begun to make their discomfort with him somewhat more apparent.

So far, Trump's political base - representing about 35% of eligible voters - has stuck with him, despite the scandals and the mess the Republicans and he have made of their agenda, particularly the repeal of former President Barack Obama's signature health-care reform. Trump has already lost the independents who supported him in the election, and if he doesn't deliver on his promises - and cannot persuade his supporters that this failure is the Democrats' fault - that base may begin to erode.

Talk of impeachment has become ubiquitous, but impeachment shouldn't be attempted - and cannot be politically viable - unless it has a bipartisan basis rooted in the center of the two parties, as was the case with Nixon. The president could also be forced to leave office under the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, which provides for the removal of a president deemed incapable of fulfilling the duties of office. But that amendment, oddly, calls for the vice president to initiate such a proceeding - an unlikely scenario - and that such a move have the backing of a majority of the cabinet or the Congress.

At times Trump looks miserable in the job, leading some to think he might just go back to New York City. But he often expresses great pride, and a certain wonder, that he won, and he likes the amenities of the job. Also, he keeps telling us that he's not a quitter. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Elizabeth Drew is a regular contributor to *The New York Review of Books* and the author, most recently, of *Washington Journal: Reporting Watergate and Richard Nixon's Downfall*.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.