

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



May 26, 2016

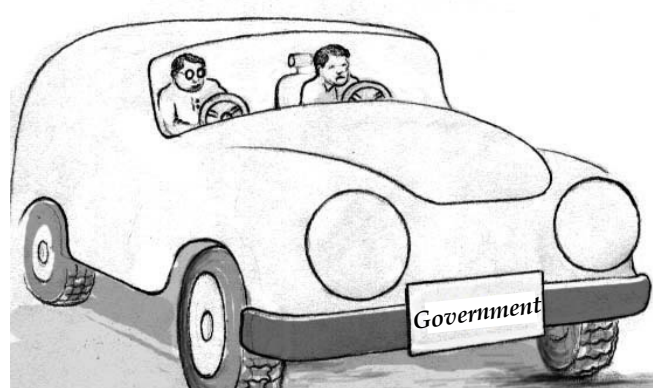
Community Development and Afghanistan

In recent years there has been a fresh concern with life at the community level. This concern has arisen as a result of expression of social forces in the lives of groups and people throughout the world. But because of the different stages of development or diverse ways of life, in many countries these social forces manifest themselves in various ways and create what appears to be quite a different set of problems.

In those countries where industrialization and urbanization are relatively well advanced, the focus of concern is the loss of community as a meaningful form of social and moral association. The current popularity of such words as disorganization, disintegration, decline, insecurity, breakdown, instability and the like have relevance to trends in the community life in industrialized countries.

In the less developed or developing countries, on the other hand the problem has a rather different focus. In these countries one finds relatively cohesive communities, closely knit kinship systems and intimate inter-personal relations. But powerful political, economic and social forces are at work stimulating these countries to shift their politico-economic systems so as to make them responsive to economic development by adopting modern techniques of work and living. These forces have been at work since the post World War II period or earlier and were accelerated by substantial aid programs of some of the major advanced countries and the United Nations assistance programs. It has been increasingly recognized that the imposition of modern techniques on ancient cultures may destroy old values, create disruption and lead to problems which exist in all large urban centers. So there is a serious concern as to how communities in less-developed countries, like Afghanistan, may be stimulated or helped to adopt new techniques that may lead to greater economic productivity and provide better food, shelter, health and education, with the least disturbance or destruction of most of the original values relating to the traditional ways of life. If such a movement is to take place it is recognized that the community as a whole must make the adoption to the new socio-cultural environment. There is generally some misconception regarding the meaning of community development. People mostly believe that simply the construction of more roads, schools and hospitals or an increase in agricultural production and improvement of cattle breeds is the essence of a community development program. This conception cannot be denied that physical achievements are the only visible contribution of the program and are simply undertaken to encourage the people living in communities to join the program whole-heartedly. In the real sense community development is a conscious, deliberate and organized effort to bring new man-made environment in the long run. So community development aims at both material and nonmaterial changes in the society. Thus, the community development should aim at bringing balanced changes in the patterns of culture of the people living in a community. A community development program should bring the people living in a locality on a single platform to inculcate among them the spirit of self-help, responsibility, self-respect, initiative and confidence. It is necessary under this program to cultivate among the masses the ability to understand their problems, solve them mostly within local resources, or if necessary to approach the government administration to provide them technical and financial aid. Community development as defined by the United Nations is a process designed to create conditions of economic development and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and fullest reliance upon the community initiative. The main assumption behind the concept of community development is that local resources, leadership and initiative if organized by innovations can find out the solution of local problems and such efforts can be positively correlated with national development.

The specific programs under community development may include improvement in health, agricultural production, education, income, housing, handicrafts, industries, marketing, means of transportation and communication, public utilities and creating or maintaining an atmosphere of primary groups. To achieve these objective changes in the behavior, beliefs and attitudes of the member of the community are required to have active participation from local population for making community development or organizational program a success. And these are the considerations that should be kept in mind while designing and carrying out community development programs in Afghanistan. The externally designed development programs, without keeping in consideration the actual issues at the community level and without involving and engaging the people of the community and enabling them to make proper use of their own resources, are bound to face failure or they may only provide a temporary solace. The actual, permanent and lasting changes can only be made possible when the community starts understanding and learning the art of depending on themselves and addressing their problems in their own ways. Definitely, a community would require external support in certain cases, but that support should always remain a support it should not become the main player in the development of community development programs.



The Complication of Peace Process

By Hujjatullah Zia

Ten people were reportedly killed in a suicide attack in Kabul on Wednesday. The suicide bomber struck a vehicle carrying court employees in the morning rush hour in western part of the city which killed ten, including court workers and civilians, and wounded 11 others. The attack comes as the Taliban named a new leader following Mullah Akhtar Mansour's death in a US drone strike in Pakistan on Saturday. This reveals the fact that the Taliban outfits will continue their Operation Omari despite the peace declaration from Afghan government.

The Taliban elements have appointed Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, a former head of the Taliban's judiciary and one of two Mansour's deputies, as its new leader at a meeting. Sirajuddin Haqqani, the head of Haqqani network, and Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, son of former leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, are said to serve as deputies. Akhundzada is a radical scholar known for issuing public statements justifying the existence of the militant Taliban, their war against the Afghan government and the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan. His views are regarded as hawkish, and he could be expected to continue in the aggressive footsteps of Mansour.

According to official US statements, Mullah Mansour was targeted on Saturday afternoon on the main RCD Highway, which connects Pakistan with Iran; despite this confirmation, Pakistan's Foreign Office remained silent for almost 24 hours. Predictably, Pakistan has said that the United States had crossed the "red line" and claimed the attack was a violation of its sovereignty.

However, most intriguing are reports that Mansour entered Pakistan from the Islamic republic of Iran before being killed in a US drone strike. Pakistani identity documents found on the body of the man now known to be Mansour named him as Muhammad Wali, and showed he had left for Iran on March 28 and returned the day he was killed - this was denied by Iran.

In March Pakistan's Prime Minister's Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz had admitted that the Taliban leadership lived in Quetta, and that Pakistan was using this as a leverage to persuade them to engage with Kabul.

Islamabad is upset with Mansour's killing because there seems to be an understanding among Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and the US that a framework would be evolved for the use of force against the Taliban if they refused to join the peace process. "That stage has not arrived yet but the US went for solo flight," a Pakistani official is quoted as saying referring to the latest meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) in which all sides decided to give

peace a chance.

However, recently there were reports that differences emerged in the QCG as it was divided into two groups. While the US and Afghanistan pushed for the use of military force against the Taliban, Pakistan and China insisted on giving peace a chance.

Pakistan now feels this was the second time efforts to broker a peace deal were undermined because of untimely action by the US. Previously, it was the news of death of Mullah Omar that led to the collapse of a second round of direct talks between the Afghan government and Taliban representatives.

Mansour's death was a serious blow to the Taliban - who are still reeling from the death of its founder Mullah Muhammad Omar. He had just consolidated his authority over the Taliban's faction since his appointment. Refusing to come to negotiating table, Mansour staged heavy attacks against the Afghan government which increased the graph of police and civilian mortality within last year. The US and Afghan governments said Mansour had been an obstacle to a peace process that had ground to a halt when he refused to participate in peace talks earlier this year. Instead, he intensified the war in Afghanistan. Therefore, I believe that there was no solution for the US other than taking military action. The appointment of Haibatullah Akhundzada will not open a new page in peace process since he is no less radical than Mansour. It is believed that if Akhundzada continues relentless operations against Afghan government and the US forces, despite the struggles made by the QCG to bring them to peace table, he will be doomed to Mansour's fate. In other words, the US officials sought to put pressure on the Taliban through killing Mansour and pointed out that they will pursue operation against the Taliban's sanctuary.

Hence, if the Taliban elements do not show flexibility regarding peace talks, the military deal will be the last resort - which also seems appropriate.

The escalation in civilian casualties from insurgent attacks in Afghanistan brought the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan to new lows. Islamabad has long argued that the only way to end the war in Afghanistan is to bring the Taliban into the mainstream. But the question is that what if they continue their militancy despite the struggles made for talks? It should be noted that Afghanistan left no stone unturned to bring the Taliban to peace table within more than a decade, but all the efforts and energy were in vain and insurgency continued unabated which inflicted heavy casualties upon our nation. How long should Afghan people suffer from violence and bloodshed? In such a case, military action will be the only effective mechanism to be adopted.

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Can Burning Elephant Tusks Help In Protecting African and Asiatic Elephants?

By Saikat Kumar Basu

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

Recently the Kenyan government has decided to burn huge quantities elephant tusks that they have confiscated over decades to send a strong message to the international ivory trade network. Although the symbolic gesture of the initiative is greatly appreciated; however, how much this will damage the trade network of elephant tusks used in the illegal ivory industries of China and South East Asia remains to be seen. The international illegal ivory trade network is a massive billion dollar industry with several major stakeholders including influential politicians and bureaucrats, forest guards and officers, wildlife traffickers, poachers, transporters and networkers operating across the continent of Asia and Africa with major head offices located in China and South East Asia. The ivory trade has huge investments and secret trading agents in all the major continents except Antarctica and Greenland. They guard this trade jealously and are often provided with secret political support in return for the share of the big booties generated through the illegal sale and smuggling of ivory products that includes jewellery, chopsticks, figurines, statues, paper knives, idols, miniature models, parts of artificial weaponry like handles of knives and swords, wall hangings, decorative pieces to mention only a few.

Hence, one could realize that simple burning of tusks will not be able to stop the international ivory network operating in elephant rich developing and under developed nations of Asia and Africa. While the conservation movement is being initiated across the globe, thousands of wild elephants in Asia and Africa are falling

victims to the bullets of the poachers. The lucrative ivory markets of China and South East Asia have very high pull factor with constant demands for fresh elephant tusks to feed the hungry underground ivory industry. Under the present circumstances unless strong political will is involved and ivory trade is hit back by the general public by rejecting the ivory products, the mass slaughter of elephants could not be prevented.

One may ask that in spite of so much international pressures how could these markets operate in broad day light under public eye? The answer is that they are actually protected by very high level of political interest along with active support of international mafia and smuggling groups.

These groups are so powerful and have penetrated so deeply in some countries inside the highest level of political elites and administrators that they could not be restricted with simple symbolic protests. Furthermore, the countries where elephants are distributed have struggling economy and poverty at the grass root level, causing local rural community members, forest residents and fringe dwellers to be easily entrapped with the local poaching units. Unless the economic conditions of the people are improved their dependence on poaching related crimes will be very difficult to restrict. With the growing demand for the ivory products across the globe and the wildlife markets transforming into booming investment grounds and employment generator; the future of both Asiatic and African elephants appear to be bleak. Photo credit: Saikat Kumar Basu

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