

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



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How to Achieve National Integration?

As the doubts and ambiguities about the prosperity and development in Afghanistan, in the near future, are on the rise, it is imperative that the nation must come together and stand in an integrated manner so that they are able to face the challenges properly. Without a doubt, national integration is a great challenge and would test all the people in the country to a large extent. However, it is also imperative to comprehend that if Afghanistan wants to ensure reconciliation, peace and development, it must strive for integration; otherwise, all the efforts may end up in smoke. For integration to happen, it is vital that the decision and policy makers must divert their attentions to the most neglected aspects in implementation of policies and decisions – the aspect that can ensure a participatory approach. It is imperative that when the policies are implemented, all the ethnic groups and relevant stake-holders must be involved in the process; otherwise, there may remain a sense of negligence within certain groups that may later multiply the issues that cause disintegration of Afghan society.

For example, it is widely agreed that a lasting solution for Afghanistan is not through the war; it is political solution alone that has the hope of stability in the country, yet the measures have not been carried out appropriately in the same direction. Instead of the process being participatory and inclusive, it has been the reason of widening the gap between Afghan people and the government institutions, and the current situation is making sure that this gap should keep on increasing.

Moreover, the process is also widening the gap among the different ethnic groups within the Afghan society – further disintegrating the society. Though it is not possible that the reconciliation process alone may generate a sort of reintegration within Afghan society, it may, to a certain extent, prove helpful to it, provided that it is handled with prudence. However, at the same time, it must never be forgotten that the reintegration is quite a different phenomenon and require attention and devotion of its own. It is largely dependent on the political system and socio-economic environment prevalent within Afghan society.

For the reintegration of Afghan society, it is necessary that all the major social and political groups within the Afghan society must start feeling a sense of attachment with the social, political and economic lives of the country.

The reintegration of the Afghan society is only possible through a separate process – it can neither be the outcome of a miracle nor the result of the reconciliation process alone. At the present scenario, even it seems improbable that the reconciliation process may reach to any sort of viable agreement with Taliban, let alone the integration of the entire nation.

For reintegration to happen it is necessary to bring about some very basic structural changes within the Afghan political setup. One of the most basic of them is a true democracy within the country that has the capacity to represent different ethnic and minority groups appropriately so that heterogeneous Afghan society must be integrated within a single whole. Different ethnic and minority groups will not be integrated within the society if they are kept away from participating within the affairs of the country and the most crucial decisions of the nation.

Therefore, it can be said that the reintegration process is a two-fold process. Along with making these groups the part of the ongoing reconciliation process, there have to be important political amendments within a short span of time; otherwise, neither reintegration will take place nor will reconciliation produce any fruitful outcome.

In fact, the reintegration of Afghan society is a phenomenon that is much wider than the reconciliation process. For it to happen; there has to be consistent efforts and a true democratic system assisted with socio-economic stability and cultural integration. Integrating all the important factions of Afghan society within a participatory democratic system stands vital.

At the same time, there must be efforts to develop and flourish the democratic and government institutions. Unless, the institutions are run by democratic principles instead of certain personalities, there are no hopes of improvement. Among these democratic principles, the promulgation of democratic values and culture that have the capacity to develop tolerance and acceptance for others is complementary. Such institutions would ultimately strengthen the democratic in a true sense.

Moreover, the services and development initiatives that the government and other organizations carry out should not be biased and must reach the people based on their requirements, not based on ethnicity or other considerations. Making government services transparent and unbiased can develop a sense of belongingness among the people towards the government and the nation as a whole. This way the government can develop its legitimacy among the masses, and the society may experience uniform development. All these results will promote national integration, in the end.



The Vulnerability of Democracy in Afghanistan

By Hujjatullah Zia

In democratic systems, separation of powers is highly crucial and it was first discussed in 1301, Afghan calendar, in the constitution approved by King Amanullah Khan. In the current constitution, interaction of powers is more prominent and the president, who is both head of state and executive power, is bestowed high authorities.

Article 60 of Afghan Constitution says, "The President shall be the head of state of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, executing his authorities in the executive, legislative and judiciary fields in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution." Both the president and members of National Assembly will be elected through free, general, secret, and direct voting. In presidential system, president is also the head of executive power.

In Afghanistan, the executive power and legislative power are supposed to be in close interaction.

For example, one third of members of provincial council will be appointed by the president for a 5-year term, the law will be endorsed by president after being approved by National Assembly, extraordinary sessions of the Assembly during recess will be convened by presidential order, etc. On the other hand, the National Assembly which is the beating heart of democracy does not necessarily approve law but also supervise the function of executive power. The House of People is also able to impeach and incapacitate the ministers. These issues point out the interaction of executive power – which is run by president – and legislative power.

Constitutionally, "The Government shall be comprised of Ministers who work under the chairmanship of the President". President appoints the ministers with the endorsement of National Assembly.

To view the interaction of executive and judiciary powers, the president has the authority of appointing the Justice of the Supreme Court and appointing, retiring and accepting the resignation and dismissal of judges, reducing and pardoning penalties in accordance with the provisions of the law, etc.

Although National Assembly is "the highest legislative organ", laws will be endorsed by president. Hence, both legislative and executive powers have role in approving laws. The government can also issue judicial decree, which has the nature of law. Considering the above issues, one will conclude that bestowing much authority to the government will put the separation of the law or independence of all three powers under question. The post of executive officer which was established on the basis of 2014 agreement be-

tween President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, is not stated in the Constitution. Therefore, the agreement said that Loyal Jirga (Grand National Assembly) would be convened in 2016 to reform the constitution and create the post of executive officer on the basis of law.

Before convening Loya Jirga, it is said in the agreement that the post of executive officer is established based on article 50 of Constitution, article 2 of common declaration, and President's order. According to agreement, a commission would be formed for preparing a draft to reform the constitution and legitimize the post of CEO. But it did not happen and Loya Jirga was not convened last year.

Moreover, article 50 of Constitution says nothing about the post of executive officer but says that "the state shall adopt necessary measures to create a healthy administration and realize reforms in the administrative system of the country." Perhaps it has been interpreted that the government has the authority to form executive post to create a healthy administration.

The post of executive officer does not only lack legal basis, but it is also very ambiguous. It is said in the agreement, "The government's executive officer, with the tasks of executive prime minister, is determined based on the proposal of second candidate and president's agreement.

The executive officer is responsible to the president". To ponder over this article of agreement, CEO is a de facto leader with symbolic post. Similar to ministers, he is responsible to the president rather than being the head of cabinet. His authorities are not clear enough. Creating executive post is the violation of Constitution and refusing to convene Loya Jirga in 2016 was violation of the mutual agreement signed by President and CEO.

Since the executive power is run by two leaders and created ambiguity, a sense of conflict was triggered between officials. Therefore, a number of political officials, including the former President Hamid Karzai, call for convening Loya Jirga – which is refused by the government.

To sum up, the authority of executive power is more prominent than legislative and judicial powers and head of state executes "his authorities in the executive, legislative and judiciary fields".

In such a case, dividing power is not balanced. Meanwhile, designating executive post is not supported by Constitution and law is neither practiced upon nor implemented thoroughly. These are blow to democracy.

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The Consequences of Violence against Women in Family

By Qurban Ali Ansari

Violence against women means disregarding women's natural and human rights. The General Assembly of the United Nations approved November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on December 17, 1999 (Resolution 54) and called all states and international institutions to launch campaign for elimination of violence against women. Therefore, the states celebrate this day annually and adopt programs for reducing violence. Afghan government, social institutions, and women's rights advocates have ushered in campaigning against violence within the past years and encourage individuals and organizations to participate in this campaign. Being unaware of social and human rights, women are still deemed as second class citizens and suffer from different types of cruelty. Domestic violence is one of the issues that mostly goes unreported and will result in horrible consequences. Tens of Afghan women fall victim to domestic violence every year, which is applied in many ways. Two kinds of violence will be pointed out shortly:

(1) Physical violence:

It means physical harassment such as kicking and punching, depriving one of food, expelling from home, etc. Such kinds of violence are widespread in Afghanistan and have changed into daily practices. Suffering this violence, a large number of women keep silent, and hide the issue from their family members. When being asked why they suffer severely and do not leave their spouses alone, they simply say that where would they go! It reflects women's fear and worries about social and economic disadvantages and they accept all the pain and sufferings – which is called "acquired distress" by psychologists.

(2) Mental and verbal violence:

The violence does not necessarily mean punishing physically, but there is also mental and verbal violence which prevails in many families. For example, using foul language, vitriolic attack, disrespect, degrading behavior, threatening to harassment, refusing to talk, and preventing women from visiting their kith and kin are all violence.

The Consequences of Violence against women in families: Physical and verbal violence remains hidden in many cases and does not leak to the media. But such violence has strong adverse effects:

First, the children who observe such violence will be harmed emotionally, which will affect their whole life. Those children that suffer from stress will reflect the same kinds of violence in their matrimonial life.

Depression, addiction to narcotic drug, crime, and escaping from home will be the consequences of violence. Ultimately, those children who witness physical and sexual violence inflicted upon their mothers, will also accept falling victim

to violence. Researches show that those who underwent domestic violence suffer the same as those who sustained physical and sexual harassment. The girls who witness violence inflicted upon their mothers are more prone to violence. On the other hand, the boys who witness violence in their families, use violence against their spouses in matrimonial life. Second, degrading women's self-esteem: Home is the safest social institution. When the rights of women, who play the role of life-partners, are disregarded, women will naturally feel fear rather than peace or tranquility. Their self-esteem will be changed into a sense of humiliation. In such a case, women will not be able to play their motherly role, which is training and bringing up children, in proper way and the family will be changed into a cold environment.

Third, committing suicide:

Controversy and domestic violence are one of the main reasons behind committing suicide, which takes place among girls and young women every once in a while. According to a study, women who have been subjected to violence by their spouses are five times more likely to be at risk of mental harm and suicide than others, and six times more exposed to mental disorders. Within the past years, suicide occurred frequently among the youths.

If the reasons and motives are examined properly, it will be determined that domestic and social violence is the main reason. When they feel themselves unable to violence, they will resort to suicide.

Fourth, ill effects on fetus: The health of mothers and their children are highly significant during pregnancy and any kinds of violence against women will result in horrible consequences. Research shows that mother's stress and anxiety during pregnancy have a direct impact on the health of the baby. In brief, the aforementioned issues do not include all the consequences of violence, it has many adverse effects, mainly since women's natural dignity are degraded. Despite struggles made for protecting women's rights in Afghanistan, there is long distance to the favorite result. Moreover, domestic and social violence takes great toll on women. Women will not gain their appropriate status in the family or society unless fundamental changes are brought in social, cultural, political, and economic structures of the country. Reducing violence depends on cultural movement which begins from the family and can be carried out by women. Women can change the view of men regarding women through their role in the family so that the future generation are freed from violence and women could gain their high status both in the family and society.

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