

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



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Re-diagnosing our Problems

There are certain social problems around us that have disturbed our whole society and unfortunately we are not sure of what those problems are. We are mostly concerned with the ones that are not of any importance and in the process have forgotten the ones that are real and the cause of many others. We, therefore, need to re-diagnose our real problems so that we are able to address them and make our society a better one.

The society that has given only few the opportunity to take advantage of all the facilities of life and live in light, and it has pushed others in the darkness, such society, without a tinge of doubt, can be considered as an infected society. And, unfortunately, this infection has infected none other than the residents of the society. Instead of continuing their blame games, the members of the society must understand how serious the infection is and how seriously it has debilitated their health and role in the society.

And the ones, who claim to change the situation and have the ideas of amendments for this infectious society, seem to face failure; and if they continue with the similar attitude and similar approach, they are bound to face failures. As long as, the society remains indifferent to the infection and keeps on neglecting it, it would keep on remaining the victim and the disease would never be cured. It has to start hating the wound and the society as a whole must repel it, if it really wants to get rid of it.

It is highly important to understand that it is impossible to stop the flow of water by flowing with it. It is necessary to create a hurdle in its way so that it is stopped or at least make directions towards the desired destinations so that water may flow to the same directions. In the similar fashion if a person wants to go to the other side of the river by swimming through it, he needs to swim through the flow of water, not with the flow; otherwise he may never reach to the other side. Those who try to stop the water by flowing with it, they are really insane and they seem to have no logical understanding of the situation.

As a matter of fact, we have forgotten the real issues and we are so lazy that we do not want to reach to the roots of the issues that we are facing; that's why we are not able to solve our issues. We keep on cutting the leaves, while never touch the branches, the trunk and most importantly the root, and we expect that the leaves would not grow again, which is really weird.

We believe that changing few things here and there may solve our real issues, but that is not the case. In fact, the measures that we take to change few things are all based on the wrong diagnosis.

The medicine that we have suggested for the infection in our society is not suitable for it at all because the diagnosis is not appropriate. Unless, we have proper diagnosis, how can we suggest the proper medicines? It is really impossible that the medicine for fever must cure tuberculosis.

There are many in our society, among our so-called leaders, the most intelligent among our government authorities and intellectuals who claim that they are paying service to their countrymen, and they believe that they have the treatment of all sorts of our social diseases and infections. They keep on insisting that they the society has the same disease that they have cure for; they do not let us know that it is possible as well that our disease is of the type they do not have any awareness about. Nonetheless, now we have to decide that how long these sorts of insane and illogical approaches and practices would continue? How long would we keep on suffering from the, otherwise, curable infections?

Now is the time that we adopt a somewhat logical and reasonable approach. We require understanding that we have to change the society as a whole if we are really interested in curing its disease. We need to rebuild and strengthen its immune system so that it is able to resist against the infections successfully. We have to make it believe that it can live without an infection and that it has a choice to do so. We need to make it appear beautiful and clean and let its susceptibility to diseases shrink.

We need to fill its stomach with the hard-earned and easily digestible food, and make its veins filled with the blood full of energy and life. We need to strengthen its bone with the vitamins of determination and iron will. We need to make its mind clear and able to think logically and rationally. We need to make its legs and hands supportive enough so that it will be able to stand on its own and do things independently.

There is no more room for mistakes, laziness and ignorance. The time would never wait for us and the history is never lenient to the ones who are not prepared and who waste their time in repeating their errors. We need to re-diagnose the infections of our society and need to suggest medicine as per the proper diagnosis.

International Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Considering the links between aid effectiveness and security, the effectiveness of aid has a major impact on development, peace and stability in the country. Corruptions, lack of political wills, wastefulness, Un-fulfillment of donor pledges and maladministration are the main challenges. Most of the aids have been prescriptive and driven by donor priorities – rather than responsive to evident Afghan needs, priorities and preferences. Too many projects are designed to deliver rapid, visible results, rather than to achieve sustainable poverty reduction or capacity-building objectives. One quarter of all aid to Afghanistan has been allocated to technical assistance – which is intended to build government capacity – yet much of such assistance has been wasteful, donor-driven and of limited impact. In the design or execution of projects, too often the promotion of the capabilities, status and rights of women is an afterthought or perfunctory consideration. Most aid has been directed to the urban centers, rather than to rural areas where it is most needed and more than three-quarters of Afghans live. At a macro level, areas such as agriculture have been under-resourced due to a lack of prioritization. According to reports estimated that 40% of the aid money spent in Afghanistan has found its way back to rich donor countries such as corporate profits, consultants' salaries and other costs, significantly inflating the cost of projects. For example, a road between the centre of Kabul and the international airport cost over \$2.3m per kilometre, at least four times the average cost of building a road in Afghanistan. On the other hand, international community has pledged \$25bn to Afghanistan since 2001 but only \$15bn has been delivered. According to previous reports by Acbar, an alliance of international aid agencies working in the country, including Oxfam, Christian Aid, Islamic Relief and Save the Children.

At the same time as there are undoubtedly resource constraints in Afghanistan, donors have fallen short on pledges made under the Afghanistan Compact to use more Afghan human and material resources. Over half of all aid to Afghanistan is tied, by which donors often require procurement of services or resources from their own countries. NGOs have a vital role in supporting rural development and are comparatively cost effective. Yet some donors have reduced funding for Afghan and international NGOs, which has limited their ability to support the delivery of essential services, especially in rural areas, and to build the capacities of communities and local government. Donors are failing to fulfill their commitment under the Afghanistan Compact to ensure taxpayers receive value for money. Vast sums of aid are lost in corporate profits of contractors and sub-contractors, which can be as high as 50% on a single contract. Minimal transparency in procurement and tendering processes stifles competition and efficiency. A vast amount of aid is absorbed by high salaries, with generous allowances, and other costs of expatriates working for consulting firms and contractors; and with the recent deterioration

in security such costs are increasing. Efficiency is further impaired by excessive donor bureaucracy. However, some changes have been occurred but are insufficient. There is limited donor transparency, and few mechanisms to hold donors accountable, or for effective scrutiny, monitoring and evaluation. The Afghanistan Compact has 77 measurable benchmarks for the Afghan government, but none for donors. Donors are subject to little independent scrutiny; reporting to the Afghan government has improved but is insufficient; and downward accountability to project beneficiaries is limited or non-existent. There are also disparities in the geographical distribution of aid. This is due to a range of factors, but not least because aid is being used to achieve military or political objectives. A number of major donors direct a disproportionate share of their funds to the southern provinces where the insurgency is strongest; if it were a state, Helmand alone would be the world's fifth largest recipient of funds from USAID, the US Agency for International Development. These disparities are also reflected in the pattern of combined government and donor spending. The most insecure provinces of Nimroz, Helmand, Zabul, Kandahar and Uruzgan have been allocated more than \$200 per person, whereas as many other provinces are due to receive less than half this amount. The resentment which these significant disparities has generated, and the perverse incentives created for secure areas, which perceive that insecurity attracts aid, this approach is dangerously short-sighted and has contributed to the spread of insecurity. Some two-thirds of foreign assistance bypasses the Afghan government, which undermines efforts to build effective state institutions, especially at sub-national level. This is partly attributable to problems in budget execution, weak governance, inadequate government human capacity and widespread corruption – which the Afghan government and donors over the past years should have done more to address. It is of great concern that there appears to be a lack of political will to tackle high level corruption.

Nevertheless, there has been an incremental increase in government capacity, for example, in the ministries of Finance and Education, and in improved public financial management systems.

Finally, the impact of assistance to Afghanistan is heavily affected by the wider social, economic, legal, security and political environment; thus, reforms are required in many spheres in order to maximize aid effectiveness. New aids, pledged 15.2bn\$, can bring significant difference to Afghan lives, but the aforementioned challenges can severely effect on quality of aid. It is high time that donors and the Afghan government should honestly carry out their historic responsibilities to enhance its effectiveness. Donors should spend aid through Afghan government programs but ensure the quality and ultimate objective of reducing poverty, quality education, demand-driven and accountable to Afghan citizens.

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Taliban – The Product of Social-Political Background

By Hujjatullah Zia

The Taliban's sudden emergence in 1994, their swift military upshot and strange ideology brought surprise not only to Afghanistan but to the entire world. A number of political pundits believed that the Taliban – unlike the jihadi groups which came from the heart of Afghan society – were the product of strangers' supports. The Taliban claimed to be national reformists and their movement was based on religious tenets to end injustice, moral turpitude and social-political chaos. The Taliban's founder Mullah Muhammad Omar said that the establishment of the Taliban group was his personal idea. He said that he was studying in a Madrasah in Kandahar province but when corruption spread throughout the city, he sought to protest against the status quo. Therefore, according to him, he called on Madrasah students to take actions against the corruption and about 53 individuals resorted to arms, which were borrowed from the locals. Similarly, Mullah Ehsanullah, one of the Taliban's high-ranking leaders, said that they launched their movement following their disappointment with the jihadi leaders and international community in stabilizing the country.

Historical and cultural commonalities are deeply embedded in Afghan-Pak border and more than three million Afghans, immigrated to Pakistan following the invasion of former Soviet in the country – this led to cultural, social, economic and political amalgamations. It is believed that the Taliban are a self-born group and its members were constituted of Madrasah students who were discontented with the Mujahedeen's wars and sought to end the civil unrests, but later supported by foreign powers. One cannot deny that the country's social, cultural and historical backgrounds played key role in establishing the Taliban. In other words, the potential of an insurgent group existed in political and social fabric of society, though, later supported by foreigners.

Formerly, Madrasah students and mullahs were called "Taliban". Taliban, not as an independent entity, were constantly involved with the state-local issues and individuals and were active in social and political issues in an unorganized way.

Hence, they were not a unique and newly emergent group in the country. They were inclined to take part in political affairs and resorted to policy for implementing their religious understandings and ideology in ragtag manner.

The Taliban's systematized movement in 1994 was the continuation of a "social movement" and the product of country's history – an Afghan political figure Jafar Mahdavi points out the same fact in his book entitled "The Taliban's Political Sociology". According to him, when Mujahedeen overcame the former Soviet, Madrasahs and mullahs were introduced as key institutions of Jihad. Subsequently, a number of clergy refused to involve in internal issues and resumed their jobs of teaching in Madrasahs but some believe that

they formed the nucleus of the Taliban. Later, with the extension of this group, a number of multiple groups with different social backgrounds joined the Taliban.

The former head of High Peace Council (HPC) Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was killed on September 20, 2011, said that the Taliban are constituted of: (1) A group of communist officers in favor of Dr. Najib. (2) A group of Pakistani militias and members of Sepah-e-Sahaba. (3) A group of Afghan religious students. (4) A group of Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar – which has recently joined peace process – and Hezb-e-Harakat Inqelab-e-Islami led by Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi. (5) A group of individuals engaged in drug trafficking. (6) A number of tribal leaders.

Seemingly, the Taliban were more religious individuals than being politicians and their knowledge of religion did not go beyond small number of books and their political worldview was restricted within some provinces and their political knowledge was gained only through media. The Taliban's headquarter and their leadership council in Kandahar had 50 members with religious titles. The Taliban commanders were responsible to no one about their financial earnings and deemed them booty. Therefore, since peace talks restricted their financial and political exploitations, they were the first to turn down. Those who sought peace, without the permission of leadership council, were deemed against the Islamic Emirate of Taliban and called "insurgent" and fighting against them was declared a religious obligation.

On the other hand, the Taliban were in need of the forces to continue fighting without hesitation under Omar's decree. Hence, negotiation with political opponents could lead to mistrust between the fighters and their leaders – that is why the Taliban refused to hold talks with the special envoy of international community and would negotiate only with the parties that intended to surrender to them. Unlike ordinary members of the Taliban, their commanders hardly come from seminaries or former Mujahedeen.

An officer from Abdul Rashid Dostum's group, who fought many battles against the Taliban, wrote that many expert officers, professionals and gunners of former regime were serving the Taliban. They mapped out and targeted precisely.

Up to 1995, the tactical operation of artillery and ironclad belonged to the communist officers. In short, a large number of those officers were members of Hezb-e-Democratic Khalq-e-Afghanistan and some were devoted to former Minister of Defense Shah Nawaz Tanai – who was also high member of the Hezb. Moreover, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar said in an interview with Frontier Post Newspaper that 1600 communist officers served in the Taliban group.

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