

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



October 11, 2015

## Inclining Corruption Amidst Declining Economy

Every deed we undertake on account of greater interest is deemed a divine service that earns us virtue and fortifies our faith. If one tends to cut down or exploits the amount of time, authority and resources at his dispense for some heinous purposes is deemed an evil practice and unforgivable deed. This is an act of corruption and equally condemnable deed. This evil practice give birth to thousands of harms, crucifies justice, equality, peace and order turning the society a breeding ground of viciousness and initialize the cycle of evil.

Afghanistan suffers the most at the hands of prolonged war. The four decades of war have earned nothing except ruins, countless miseries and devastation for poor masses. The year's long war destroyed economic infrastructures completely and dragged Afghanistan towards annulment. No significant progress has been made albeit elongated international efforts to revive Afghanistan's economy improve the living standard of people and create greater job opportunities provided that the menace of corruption constantly depleted the rate of progress is minimized. Afghanistan stands among the poorest countries of world with more than 60 percent of its population living below or slightly above the line of poverty; still some officials do not sympathize with Afghans. The most prior reason behind the failure to strengthen the backbone of Afghan economy is the severe security problems and deep-rooted corruption.

We have to admit the core reason behind the failure to strengthen the backbone of Afghan economy is the severe security problems and deep-rooted corruption. It is anticipated the government will work out a plan to eradicate this great menace. As the problem of security and corruption persist, there seems to be a declining chance of betterment, and people will still have to wait for actual prosperity. This is a grave state of worsening affair that presses hard the already wrecked economy of Afghanistan and utter negligence of government to tackle the peril of corruption. This is an undeniable fact either government is unwilling or hapless before powerful power abusers -despite the fact, president has been showing interest in lodging cases against power abusers.

Earlier, the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) released its report that claimed corruption and irregularities taking place on a massive scale at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The report said current and former government officials and members of parliament had been able to appoint their relatives to key diplomatic positions at the ministry. It said ethnicity; favoritism and inter-personal rivalries raised questions over transparency in the procedure of hiring and firing employees in the ministry. Subsequently, some officials were sacked from their offices but those involved in the plot were not tried.

Undeniably, Afghanistan's economy is the worst hit by consecutive quacks of corruption. The rumors of partial prosecution of multibillion dollar Kabul bank scandal diffused not, followed by Ministry of defense multimillion dollar scandal. According to credible media reports, the ministry of defense officials plotted and executed a misappropriation of over 100m USD. This undoubtedly is a great deal of manipulation of position or authority and misuse of public property. The government must enforce its authority, inflicting stricter terms of punishment to those involved behind the plot, once are charged.

The National Unity Government (NUG) took the issue into consideration whilst promising to closely investigate cases of corruption in government institutions. Following the rumors of allegations the President Ghani assigned a commission to investigate the agreements has presented its report to the president -to date no confidential report is submitted to president and no one is tried in those cases. In the wake of renowned bank scandals and financial embezzlements, the international institutions had lost their confidence, undertaking any consignment with Afghan banks and donor countries hesitant to grant financial supports to poverty stricken country. This tragic incident certainly will earn us infamy.

Putting an end to this very issue requires committed leadership, owing to take serious and long lasting decisions against the elimination of the prevalent corruption. Many problems in the third world countries are associated with flawed or delayed fixation of responsibilities; the culprit either escape owning the unlawful activity or keep on shifting the responsibilities from one to another stakeholder. Finally, no one is brought to book and hence justice delayed is justice denied. Particularly, when justice is to be exercised against a high profile person, then the anticipation of recovery and evenhandedness die its natural death.

Seemingly, the unity government is all-encompassing government that contains every section of Afghan society; nonetheless it's frequently subjected to prolonged suspension over making critical decisions on significant issues, as witnessed at present relative to distribution of ministries. In spite of unexpected delays in cabinet formation, an end to prevalent corruption will render one of the foremost challenges for both president and chief executive. Despite these measures the corrupt officials enjoys misappropriating their positions, provided the system of general amnesty to potential power abuser are chained fast to the ground, given number of influential personalities involved in money embezzlement from public offices, heinous crime against citizens and power misuse were given amnesty without being subjected to strict measures entailing answerability. This attitude of government had discouraged new investments with remnants intended to downsizing and withdrawing a dire omen for progress of country needs immediate reversal by practical measures. This implies that the expanding role of government in development has placed some officials in a monopolistic position and has enhanced the opportunities for unlimited administrative misappropriation.

## Success of Korea's Rural Development Program Applicable to Afghanistan

By Dr. Steven Kwon

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook Afghanistan

During the past 12 years, I have had the opportunity to visit Afghanistan over 50 times. During these visits, I have noticed the many similarities between Afghanistan and Korea, my native homeland. The citizens of both nations have faced the many challenges of multi-year wars yet have remained determined and even hopeful in the face of adversity. Also, the current food insecurity situation in Afghanistan reminds me of my youth spent in Korea when many children and families suffered from malnutrition due to limited access to food.

Korean 1950-1953

1950's - 1960s: The War and Post-War Years

I was entering elementary school when the war between North and South Korea finally ended in 1953. The country had been totally destroyed with over two million reported deaths. There were no jobs, families had been forced to flee their villages, and many households were left without fathers, brothers, or sons. Korean people everywhere were suffering from poverty and hunger, with the lives of widows and children particularly impacted.

When the first post-war winter came to Korea in late 1953 - one as cold and harsh as winters experienced in Afghanistan - many Koreans perished due to lack of food and shelter. Times were particularly tough from March to May as the wheat and barley crops were not ready to be harvested. I recall visiting my neighbor's house, only to see his six children lying on the floor, weak from hunger as they had not eaten for several days. Although the village people tried to help one another, malnutrition from protein-energy deficiency coupled with illness, particularly tuberculosis, was widespread. Sadly, the combination of cold weather and lack of food resulted in the deaths of an additional three million people in the years immediately following the war.

Seoul in 1950-1953 War

Korea remained a poor country into the 1960s. Rural areas, where over 70% of the population lived, were impacted most heavily with many families only eating one meal per day. Unemployment reached 35% and many children, including some of my friends, were forced to leave school to work on farms to supplement their family's income. As Korea lacked abundant natural resources, heavy industry, and advanced technologies, we had to rely heavily on imports. During the 1960s, Korea imported on average \$108 million of goods per year, yet exported only \$86 million. Additionally Korea was receiving \$430 million in foreign aid consisting of food and other basic necessities.

1970's: Economic Turnaround with the New Village Movement  
Fortunately things began to look up in the late 1960s and 1970s. A key person responsible for the post-war economic turnaround was the late President Chung-Hee Park who governed South Korea from 1961-1979. President Park launched a political initiative called Saemaul Undong or "New Village Movement" to modernize the rural economy. Initially, Saemaul Undong addressed the growing disparity of the standard of living between urban centers, which were rapidly industrializing, and small villages, which continued to be trapped in poverty. Diligence, self-help and collaboration were the slogans we villagers were taught to encourage us to participate in the Saemaul Undong development process. The Korean government provided the seed money and infrastructure support for implementing the Saemaul Undong movement development projects. The government also encouraged religious leaders, local elders, and everyday villagers to participate in the design and implementation of the projects. Similar to rural communities in Afghanistan, Korean villages have long been characterized by tight social bonds based on the concept of common home place and family lineages. As in Afghanistan, Korean Villages traditionally select their own leaders, hold meetings to settle problems, and organize cooperative work teams for planting, harvesting and other village projects.

The early stage of the Saemaul Undong movement focused on improving basic living conditions. Here, the government provided participating villages such as mine with a fixed amount of raw materials, including cement and iron bars,

free of charge, allowing villagers to build whatever they wished with them. Later projects concentrated on building rural infrastructure by bringing irrigation systems, bridges, and roads to rural communities.

The strong national focus on the Saemaul Undong movement, coupled with an emphasis on education and hard work, laid the foundation for Korea's post-war reconstruction. In the early 1970s, a number of major programs were implemented in Korea. First, the political leaders did their best to bring much needed stability to the country. Second, there was an increased focus on both heavy industry such as steel and electronics, and also on consumer goods such as textiles and shoes. In 1964, the country's exports totaled only \$100 million but by 1977 exports exceeded \$10 billion. Third, emphasis was placed on the development of a trained labor force and an improved education system which resulted in a high literacy rate. And finally, Korea became self-sufficient in rice production, a key food staple.

Current view of Seoul city

As a result of these changes, living standards in rural Korea improved greatly. Farm household income increased from an average of \$215 in 1970 to \$1,286 in 1979. In my village and throughout the neighboring countryside, there was increased productivity of rice farming, the major livelihood of most rural families. As a result of these changes, total rural poverty declined from 28 percent in 1970 to 11 percent in 1978. This national Saemaul Undong movement has been the major vehicle of post-war Korea to create the "Han River Miracle of Korea" which has established Korea as the 8th ranked trade partner and the 12th ranked economic power of the world today.

Korea's New Village Movement Learning Can Benefit Afghanistan  
Korea's economic progress in the 1970s due to the successful Saemaul Undong movement exceeded expectations. Agriculture was the core of many Saemaul Undong rural development programs. Although rice is a mainstay food in Korea, Soybeans (Kong in Korean) is also a native crop. Beginning in 1970, many Korean farmers began growing more Soybeans for home consumption in order to help overcome protein-energy malnutrition in a self-reliant way. This Korean experience of defeating malnutrition through Soybeans in the self-reliant way of the Saemaul Undong movement was introduced to Afghanistan by Nutrition and Education International (NEI), an international NGO. Since 2003, this model of self-reliant Soy industry development program has been pursued in Afghanistan through the efforts of key Afghanistan Ministries, particularly with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the private sector, and NEI. Together, they have worked to establish a self-sustainable full Soybean value chain that addresses malnutrition. This value chain includes four parts: Soy seed production, Soybean cultivation, Soy processing, and market development. In 2012, the World Food Program identified NEI's soy development as an effective model to improve food security of the nation. This soy program, based on the Saemaul Undong concept, became a joint program of NEI and World Food Program, and is currently funded by the Republic of Korea. Today it is common to find rural farmers in poverty-stricken areas throughout Afghanistan cultivating Soybeans for sale to local markets with some held back for home consumption. Once the farmers have produced Soybeans as trained by NEI and incorporated Soybeans into their family diet for increased protein intake, they can use the harvested Soybeans as seeds for the following years, and therefore protect their families from falling to malnutrition. This nutritional intervention in the self-reliant way of Saemaul Undong is becoming more accepted in rural Afghanistan. Soybeans have proven to grow well across Afghanistan. Given the nutritional benefits, affordability and great taste of Soybeans and other Soy foods, there is no reason why Afghanistan cannot be the first country outside Korea to defeat malnutrition through the development of a self-sustainable Soy industry!

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## Will Negotiation be a Resolution?

By Hujjatullah Zia

Preliminary assessments by intelligence agencies show that terrorist groups in Afghanistan are criminal groups, Taliban and foreign terrorists who commit unforgivable crimes on behalf of outsiders and drug smugglers," these words are spoken by President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani. He also believes that militants that launched attacks in restive parts of the country aimed to accomplish the outsiders' goals. Regarding crimes perpetrated by the Taliban insurgents, that include mass murder and looting in Kunduz, Ghani aired that the traitors were being financed by external elements behind the killings of Afghans and the looting of their properties.

The Taliban's heavy inroads and resilient power demonstrate that they are supported militarily and strategically by the outsiders and perhaps members of Mafia group - who are fishing in troubled water. The political chaos paves the way for criminals to pursue their sinister goals across the country. It is believed that a large number of the Taliban are pawns in the political game who are unaware of being employed by real players. In other words, the militants involved in insurgency in Afghanistan, despite the withdrawal of foreign forces, are not the ideologues but mercenary fighters. Therefore, they target the Afghan police and civilians alike.

The drug smugglers will be widely involved in current political unrest. After all, narcotic forms the bulk of the Taliban's financial resources. They have opposed eradication efforts in order to build support among farmers in rural areas which are crucial to their insurgency, particularly in the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand. And where opium is produced in areas where they are dominant, they assess a 10 percent tax on it; a major source of finance for their activities.

At the end of 2014, NATO's combat mission officially ended and the vast majority of foreign troops pulled out of Afghanistan. But the war is far from over. The Afghan army has now inherited a war that promises to be much longer and more difficult than that of NATO.

With unmitigated attacks of the Taliban in recent months, tension emerged between Kabul and Islamabad as Afghan officials charged ISI of backing the insurgents. Following the heavy attacks in Shah Shaheed on August 07, 2015, Ghani said, "Pakistan still remains the venue and ground for gatherings from which mercenaries send us a message of war." He added that at the time Pakistan President Nawaz Sharif said the enemies of Afghanistan are the enemies of Pakistan, "now the time has come for him to prove it."

However, Pakistan has frequently denied the finger pointing and emphasized on resuming peace talk. Of late, Express Tribune reports that Prime Minister Nawaz

Sharif is likely to brief US President Barack Obama about Pakistan's efforts to resume talks between Afghanistan and the Taliban. The newspaper quotes an anonymous source as, "PM Nawaz, during his visit to the US will brief US President Barack Obama about Pakistan's efforts on resuming talks between Afghanistan and Taliban." It adds that the US is interested in seeing concrete steps being taken from Pakistan's side regarding the peace process.

In spite of the Afghanistan's persistent efforts, peace talk between Afghan officials and the Taliban elements have never and will not ever come to fruition. The Taliban, on one hand, constantly gave the officials the green light but on the other hand, intensified their attacks. Their dual dealings have led to mistrust. It is believed that if terrorism was a political issue, diplomatic and non-violent mechanism would be effective. But terrorism is a legal phenomenon which sends the message of war and violence and seeks their material interests insatiably. Therefore, a military strategy will be far effective than diplomatic one - as other countries, including Pakistan, exercise the same method.

However, foreign politicians think optimistically about peace talks. As a result, U.S. Army General John Campbell is quoted as, "I think it's going to take a good couple of months before we see them kind of back to any kind of peace negotiation." He adds, "I think reconciliation talks will continue, but it's going to take some time to bring the right people to the table to do that." He further believes that 60 to 70 percent of the Taliban members would ultimately be open to reconciliation.

I do not agree with the Campbell's recent statements on the grounds that the militants' heavy inroads reflect the opposite of what he says. It should be noted that the Taliban are more than "political discontent" and will not lay their arms through diplomatic way (negotiation). Similarly, their thirst will not be satiated by rational discussions but material interests.

Since Pakistan herself is in the grip of terrorism and insecurity, its role is not of much significance. It will repeat the same old games which have been played a thousand and one times but in vain. Islamabad's unabated appetite for prerogative pushes it to nudge the Taliban to come to the negotiation table and therefore urges Kabul to resume the talk.

But the Taliban will not leave the ground in favor of the Islamic State (IS) group. It is self-explanatory that if the Taliban put down their arms, the IS will extend its influence and spearhead terrorist acts without obstacles. Hence, peace talk resumption will polarize the Taliban militants and only few will show tendency in this regard not 70 percent. It would be far effective if foreign countries increase their forces and tackle the issue militarily alongside the Afghan soldiers.

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