

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



October 12, 2015

Why Government is Silent?

In last few months, our country went through a number of frightening events. Although some of them were not new and were feared from many years, yet no action was taken by government to avert them. It started with sharp decline in economic activities in the country resulting in great increase in joblessness. This forced large numbers of Afghans leave the country in search of finding bread for their families. Next problem was the tragedy of fall of Kunduz to Taliban and increasing influence of Taliban in a number of provinces of the country. Once again, our government failed to do anything against them. Although there had been continuous alarming reports by the members of civil society and security forces, but no proper action was taken until the tragedy of Kunduz occurred. In the same way, government was not able to show any performance on large number of bomb explosions and terror attacks in Kabul and some other provinces in which hundreds of civilians were killed or injured. Due to this inactiveness of government, these attacks are still on rise and even capital Kabul is not safe. However, the most painful of these is the silence of government and its representatives when people badly needed their support. The silence of government after Kunduz incident and its inactiveness to do anything for the victims of Kunduz has enraged almost all the civilians.

It is a grave fact that our economy is absolutely dependent on foreign assistance and due to the absence of local production, we depend on a number of countries to import almost every commodity. In the last 12 years of democratic government, international donors and their aid agencies were working in large numbers and this made an artificial economic bubble in the country but as the international forces announced to leave Afghanistan, foreign donors also stopped their activities. It was unfortunate that no past government did anything to promote local production. However, when this unity government came, a president good at economics headed it and people were hopeful that he may come up with some projects to boost economic activities in the country but so far, there has been no change in this regard. In last one year of this government, even the necessary reforms have not been brought and still, doing business in Afghanistan is very difficult and challenging.

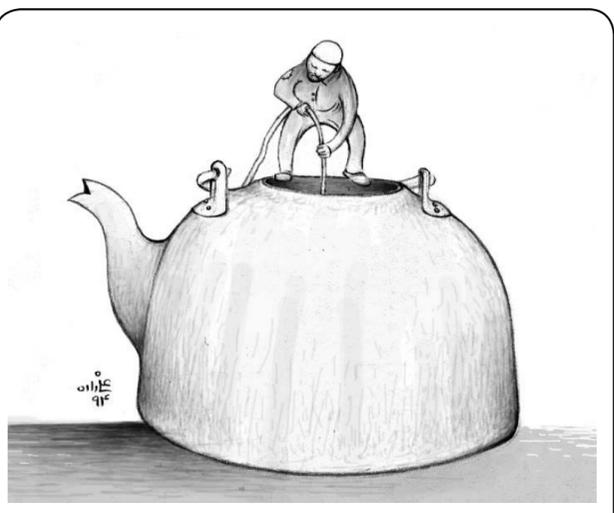
When Kunduz fell into the hands of Taliban, people of the country protested against government for a number of reasons. First, some dubious decisions were made due to which the city fell into the hands of Taliban. Secondly, government for the victims of this incident has announced no relief program until now. Thousands of people have been displaced who are still waiting for some kind of help from the government. While government is still busy in thinking, a businessperson has rented a house in Kabul for the displaced people of Kunduz where they are given food and clothing as well.

Similarly, the security conditions are worsening with every passing day. Taliban are busy in fighting at a number of provinces and government forces are struggling to keep the control of different areas. This week's suicide attacks in Kabul and increasing Taliban activities in other provinces is a big question mark on the performance of government. People have absolute trust on the security forces but they fear that due to poor leadership, the performance and effectiveness of our security forces have also declined. Before this, government was in the hope of having negotiations with Taliban but recent atrocities of Taliban in Kunduz have proved that they do not believe in humanity and they can only understand the language of force and they need to be dealt accordingly.

After the incident of Peshawar school attack, Pakistani security forces carried out a massive operation against Taliban and foreign terrorists in the northern areas of Pakistan because of which the attacks of Taliban have greatly decreased and security condition in Pakistan has greatly improved. We also need such an operation and this can only happen when we will close the door of negotiations or compromise with Taliban because past events have shown that they are true enemies of Afghanistan and they need to be dealt accordingly.

On all these occasions, people arranged demonstrations against the silence and inactiveness of government. Demands were made that if government is not able to run the country, it should step down and leave the power for those who can run this country.

Due to the above facts, people are badly losing hope about the future of their country. It is the reason why, they are leaving the country in large numbers. It is the time that government should break its silence and assure masses that government is with them. If government is busy in doing something, it must be brought into the knowledge of people. In the same way, government should also discuss the present situation of Afghanistan with its allies and let people know if they are going to help or not. If our Allied friends are going to continue their support in future, it should be brought into the knowledge of people as it might boost up the confidence of investors, businesspersons and public. But above all, the heads of government; the President and the Chief Executive need to be vocal and make more appearance in general public. At present, people need some words of satisfaction from government if government is not in position of doing something else.



Syrians Need Peace, from Wherever it Comes!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

It was not surprising when the Russian intervention in Syria brought mixed reactions. There is some criticism on this act but there are also a number of voices that see hope in the peaceful settlement of this bloody war.

The first and foremost reason is the horrible time expansion of Syrian war. In the beginning, it was thought to be a process similar to that of Libya, Afghanistan or Iraq in which the operation of Allied forces concluded successfully in a few months. It was estimated that the presence of a formal Syrian army might hinder the process for a couple of months but due to the information and evidences that large numbers of Syrian army officers were fleeing the force and joining the Anti-Assad squad, it was hoped that the resistance of Syrian forces might not be much problematic. However, this miscalculation gave birth to so many other unexpected problems. It was not thought as what might happen to anti-regime forces if the war kept stretching for years and years. The way these forces were helped and provided with necessary weaponry and training in the beginning by Allied powers resulted in their initial success and brisk movement towards Damascus but later on, prolonging war changed the scenario. Some of the groups that were expected to fight the Syrian army started fighting with anti-Assad resistance forces. It was a great blow to the whole operation of removing Assad from power. With the passage of time, the condition got worse and large numbers of groups were formed in which intentions of many were unknown. Some of them were fighting against each other and this inter-group fighting indirectly strengthened the Assad forces. It looked that Allied powers had lost control on many of the groups that were formed with the money of their taxpayers. These groups turned into blood-sucking monsters, the guilt of which will always be felt by their creators.

This unexpected expansion of war resulted in the death of more than 300,000 Syrians. The blaze of war did not remain limited to Syria only and now it looks as if entire Middle East is in fire. Even the safe countries of Saudi Arabia and Qatar are in danger of being affected by this war.

War of Syria gave birth to the extremist Jihadist group of ISIS. In the beginning, it was a part of Jihadists that were found and sponsored by Allied powers to fight the regime forces. With the passage of time, they got more and more power and then they declared to be a separate entity with an objective of establishing Islamic state in the region that they later intended to extend all over the world. At the beginning of this operation, Al-Qaeda was the major threat for Allied powers but now, it has gone behind the curtain and ISIS emerged as an unprecedented cruel and powerful terrorist organization. ISIS is responsible for killing of thousands of innocent people in the areas they captured. It may take years before this monster organization is eliminated and may further destabilize the region.

Although ISIS was declared a terrorist organization right from their emergence and now for more than a year, Allied powers of USA, UK and France are busy in bombing them but the whole process is very much dubious. Many military analysts doubt on the health of these air raids against ISIS militants. It is

strange that we see the large convoys of IS tanks, and armored vehicles that roam around without any fear. It is the reason why, in the anti-IS bombing of more than a year, the terrorist organization has endured very less harms and they are still strongly controlling the large parts of Iraq and Syria.

Russian forces started their air assault with the same reason. It was said that Allied powers are deliberately not attacking the IS targets and thus gives a reason for Russian forces to come into action. On the other hand, the confusion of our and their terrorist group also became a problem in the case of Syria. There are almost a dozen groups fighting in Syria. Some of them, that are fighting against the Assad forces, have been labeled to be friendly groups by Allied powers while others, that fight with Assad forces and also with other groups have been called terrorist groups. Allied powers had been in great difficulty in differentiating and targeting these groups due to the same problem. It also became the reason for ineffectiveness of Allied bombing against ISIS militants. It also remains a fact that ISIS militants are also fighting Syrian forces and Allied planes avoided to target at points where they were in direct confrontation with Syrian forces.

Along with ISIS, there are a number of other terrorist organizations like Al-Nusra Front and others that are equally dangerous for the people of Syria.

The existence of some of these groups might be acceptable for Allied powers due to the fact that they are fighting Assad's forces but it remains a fact that these terror groups are not liked by common Syrians. Russian bombing might weaken or eliminate some or all of these groups and bring relief to the Syrians. Although the Allied powers had made this claim of bringing relief to Syrians when they started the war but now, the same work is done by the Russians and it is the reason that people are welcoming these attacks.

When the war started in Syria, Syrians were hopeful that soon they will be able to live in a country more democratic and peaceful than it used to be under the Assad family but having a look at the present conditions, they are of the view that the time in Assad's reign was better than today. The war does not seem to end.

It does not seem to end peacefully even if the Anti-Assad forces come into power because they are divided on how to run the country. There is a group including of the Syrian army generals who might like to lead the country with a military force. There are large numbers of terrorist organizations that might deprive the people of all their rights on the name of Islamic government or Sharia. On the other hand, the forces of Assad are still strong after they got help from Iran and Russia.

This war has also given birth to the worst refugee problem of the world since WW2.

Whatever may be the result of Russian intervention, Syrians and other peace-loving people of the world only demand that war should stop. They do not want a democratic government that is built on their corpses. They want to live under any government that should make sure that there would be peace as under the peace only, they would thrive and prosper.

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The French Exception?

By Kenneth Rogoff

More than ever, the French economy is at the center of the global debate about how far one can push the limits of state size and control in a capitalist democracy. To those on the left, France's generous benefits and strong trade unions provide a formula for a more inclusive welfare state. To those on the right, France's oversized and intrusive government offers only a blueprint for secular decline. For the moment, the right looks right.

Once nearly the economic equal of Germany, France has fallen well behind over the past decade, with per capita GDP now about 10% lower. France may punch above its weight politically, but it punches far below its weight economically.

Whenever someone proposes turning the eurozone into a transfer union, as France's economy minister, Emmanuel Macron, recently did, the presumption is that Germany will carry everyone else on its shoulders. But why should only Germany have that responsibility? France's economy is roughly three-quarters the size of Germany's. Persuading the Germans that the French are willing and able to pay their fair share could make room for a lot of necessary compromises that until now have seemed impossible.

For now, few people feel confident about France's economic future. The good news is that France is not quite as French as it pretends to be. Yes, there is a 35-hour workweek, but companies can negotiate around the limit by offering to pay more for overtime. The effective workweek for most workers is perhaps closer to 39 hours.

Yes, France has just effectively banned the car service Uber, whose business model has arguably been one of the most transformative and important advances of the decade. But, while this is a triumph for taxi unions and a tragedy for passengers and Uber drivers, France has also started focusing on nurturing small, high-potential technology companies. The French government is no longer placing all its bets on big, state-led projects, as it did in the 1970s heyday of massive investment in high-speed trains and Airbus. President François Hollande has given Macron wide berth to try to implement desperately needed structural reforms of labor and product markets. Of course, it remains to be seen just how much political support such market-oriented policies can sustain. Progressive economists love the French government for spending a staggering 57% of GDP, compared to government expenditures of 44% of GDP for Germany. And it must be acknowledged that the French government provides excellent value in some key areas. France's health service justly receives much better reviews than the

United Kingdom's. French citizens might pay a lot of taxes and suffer a high degree of regulation, but at least they get something in return.

Still, France's super-size government is hardly a source of unalloyed dynamism. And indeed, one suspects that France's GDP and productivity measures are flattered by the fact that, for lack of market prices, statisticians blindly assume that citizens get one dollar of value for each dollar spent on government, which might be an overstatement.

Worryingly, it is not clear how well France's culture of inclusiveness can ever extend to immigrants. The same strict firing laws and high levels of minimum wages that are intended to protect native French workers from globalization make it much more difficult for newcomers to land jobs. Yet virtually every study of global inequality suggests that gains from allowing greater labor mobility dwarf gains from redistributing income among natives. By contrast, the more liberal labor laws in the United States and the United Kingdom ensure more opportunities for outsiders.

The center of Paris and other French cities may be grand, but many immigrants from North Africa and elsewhere live in squalid ghettos on the outskirts. Although the precise rate of unemployment for particular ethnic groups is not known (French law precludes collecting data by ethnic classification), anecdotal evidence suggests much higher levels of joblessness for immigrants and their descendants.

True, the government provides generous welfare benefits; but this alone does not produce inclusiveness. Strong popular support for Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration National Front party, together with French recalcitrance about accepting migrants escaping the war in Syria, indicates the problems with applying the French model in diverse societies. Another obstacle to applying the French model elsewhere is that France enjoys certain unique advantages that are arguably critical to its success. Elite French managers are widely considered among the best in the world, and are frequently selected to head major international corporations. Corruption is certainly a problem, but significantly less so than in most of the eurozone's south. (The Italian state is also large and intrusive, but it does not produce the high-quality public services that the French government does.) Lastly, France arguably has one of the world's most favorable natural environments, with fertile soil and an exceptionally temperate climate. A healthy French economy would do wonders to help lift the eurozone out of its malaise. It could also provide an example to countries everywhere of how inclusive capitalism can work. But that assumes that the government will embrace the structural reforms that France's economy so desperately needs.

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