

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



October 19, 2015

Responsibilities are Unavoidable

It is now considered a truth that human nature tries to avoid the negative consequences both consciously and as the result of the unconscious mind, where the psychological impact of the fame and ill-fame is decided by the consequences from the early childhood by our parents. Thus we at our different stages of life react as it is in our unconscious since early life. We tend to like and hold to the positive impacts of an action but seem to avoid the unfavorable results and even put it on the shoulder of others. However, this question needs to be answered that if someone enjoys the outcomes as a result of the consequences, why not to face the negative consequences as well? While we cry for our rights and enjoy while receiving them, why don't realize that we need to perform some very important responsibilities as well.

The famous writer Noam Chomsky says, "Responsibility I believe accrues through privilege. People like you and me have an unbelievable amount of privilege and therefore we have a huge amount of responsibility. We live in free societies where we are not afraid of the police; we have extraordinary wealth available to us by global standards. If you have those things, then you have the kind of responsibility that a person does not have if he or she is slaving seventy hours a week to put food on the table; a responsibility at the very least to inform yourself about power. Beyond that, it is a question of whether you believe in moral certainties or not."

How does it is practiced that when a businessman enjoys the profit in good days as return and in bad days he also faces the loss and feels himself responsible for all the decisions that has led the company to loss, then what on earth has happened to our nation, specially the politicians that they do not admit their mistakes, and often blunders? Why has this society been ruined in terms of responsibility? Every single man in the hierarchy of the society blames the other person and frees himself? Why on earth is the top hierarchy of the country not accountable to law? Why is it that the poor and the weaker are expected to be more responsible than the rich and the authoritative people? Can the poor perform better than the rich in contributing for the society and supporting the people in coming out of troubles and problems? The poor, themselves, are caught in the quagmire of troubles, how can they be more responsible to the society?

The politicians, on the other hand, are keeping themselves aloof of all the responsibilities. They are, in fact, practicing the blame game to score points because the political culture demands so!

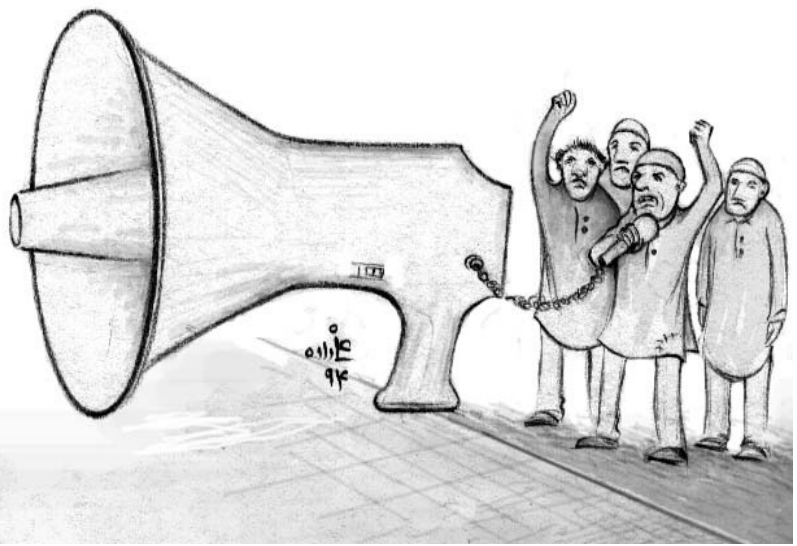
Rectifying the mistakes is a rectifying step but arrives when someone admits the mistakes. The blame game turns to no point and there is no any win-win situation, we only have loss-loss situation in the game theory of the blame games. It is a debate of egos and the egos never surrender. Blame games, political conspiracies and personal self-interest achievements have resulted to a huge damage to the country's economic and political development, which can be seen that the 50% of the population has been pushed to the darkness of poverty, which is also the mother of all evils and crimes.

It can be observed in our society that mostly the children are not nourished with a sense of true responsibility. As they grow up, they do not seem to realize what their responsibilities are towards their fellow human beings and towards their society. Mostly, they are taught to fulfill certain responsibilities which are limited to their individual lives. They do not seem to realize how they fit within a society and what their responsibilities are as responsible citizens.

Another observation is that mostly people expect the society to fulfill their rights, but they themselves do not want to be held responsible towards the others. Every individual thinks others are responsible to take care of their rights but does not realize that thinking in such a way will divide the whole society in alienated individuals whose goals are to pursue their own motives. They seem to fear responsibility and that is one of the worst things to do as a social being. As Frank Crane has put it, "Responsibility is the thing people dread the most of all. Yet it is the one thing in the world that develops us, gives us manhood or womanhood fiber."

It is important to remember that rights bring responsibility, and the responsibility makes you accountable and accountability sees no blame. Passing the buck would never solve the problem. The responsibility would keep on being transferred to others and would never reach to the stage of realization. The great nations of world have, as a matter of fact, realized this golden principle that they themselves have the responsibility of building their nations and solving their issues. And, that's why they can be easily differentiated as more prosperous and developed nations of the world.

Definitely, all the members of the society must perform their responsibilities but the leaders of the nation must be the trend setters. They need to set examples for others by performing their responsibilities without any sort of negligence. The governments that realize their responsibilities and do not fall short of providing the people their rights are mostly appreciated and at the same time supported by their people. People, finding the governments and leaders, responsible citizens tend to do the same and thus lend a hand in the development of the country.



Afghanistan Requires Consistent Support

By Dilawar Sherzai

Currently Afghanistan is going through a very crucial phase of its history. This phase is going to decide the future for the people of Afghanistan. Whether they will have a peaceful and tranquil life or otherwise, largely depends on how the situation is handled today.

In recent months Afghanistan has seen deterioration in the security situation to a large extent. Taliban have been able to establish their dominance in few of Afghan provinces; and in certain northern districts, for the first time, they have been able to show their astonishing strength. The fall of Kunduz to Taliban was another major example showing how they have reorganized and prepared themselves to carry out complex attacks. The attack also raised concerns about the capability of Afghan government and security forces to ensure security of the people.

As the concerns are mounting regarding the future of peace and tranquility in the country, US President Barack Obama has announced that US may delay the drawdown of its troops. He announced that the current posture of troops - 9,800 - will stay in the country through the end of 2016. He also announced that a total of 5,500 soldiers will stay in Afghanistan after 2016, when he leaves office.

It seems that US is really concerned about the situation in Afghanistan and it shows that it is interested in monitoring the situation closely. However, the important thing is to pursue a peace process that may guarantee a lasting peace in the country. US has been supporting such a peace process but that has not been successful yet.

Obama while announcing the change in the plan of troops drawdown said, "By now it should be clear to Taliban and all who oppose Afghanistan's progress the only real way to achieve the full draw down of US and foreign troops from Afghanistan is through a lasting political settlement with the Afghan government." Nevertheless, such a settlement is nowhere to be found. Since the peace talks hosted by Pakistan in Murree, there has not been any sort of development. Conversely, there have been increased doubts and uncertainties as the trust and cooperation between the National Unity Government (NUG) and Islamabad has reached to zero, or even below zero, as they are in the process of blaming each other for the deadlock in the peace talks.

Pakistani government has yet again announced its support for peace talks with Taliban, but there are doubts among the Afghan officials regarding its intentions. The cooperation between both the governments regarding the process has never been long lasting. There have been many episodes in the drama of the peace process but it has never been concluded.

It is important that US along with the regional powers must monitor the peace talks and ensure that they do it for the better future of

the people of Afghanistan, not for their own political and strategic interests. With the support and involvement of US and the countries like Russia, China, Pakistan, Turkey and India, a lasting peace can be developed in Afghanistan.

Within a few days to come, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is going to have a visit to US, where it is believed that the issue of the peace process with Taliban will also be discussed. Obama had said in a statement, "Next week I will host Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan and I will continue to urge all parties in the region to press the Taliban to return to peace talks and to do their part in pursue to the peace that Afghans deserve." However, it is also important that there must be practical steps to ensure progress in the peace process; otherwise, verbal insistence has always been made in this regard.

For Afghanistan to enter the peace talks (if they initiate) from a position of strength, it is necessary that Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) must be further strengthened. It is a good sign that US forces will remain in the country for a couple of more years, but important point is to make use of this presence to a maximum extent. NATO has also welcomed Obama's decision and it may also keep its forces in the country for some more years. There are expectations that NATO will make such an announcement in its December session. Therefore, there should be practical efforts to ensure that this presence benefit ANSF as much as possible.

Following Obama's decision regarding its troops, Germany has also given willingness to keep its troops in Afghanistan. The German Chancellor Angela Merkel strongly welcomed President Obama's plans to prolong the troops' engagement in Afghanistan. Her spokesman Steffen Seibert told a news conference on Friday, "She (Angela Merkel) strongly welcomes yesterday's announcement from President Obama on the future U.S. engagement in Afghanistan... This announcement is an important signal to the international community; it is an important signal to the alliance partners of the United States but above all an important signal to the Afghan people."

However, Germany has not yet given a deadline that may mark its troops' drawdown. The German soldiers account for less than 7 percent of current NATO forces in Afghanistan, which total 13,000, and their role is totally to support Afghan security forces. The role and support of international community in Afghanistan are of immense importance. As the security challenges are rising with the attacks of Taliban and rise of Islamic State (IS) militants, the security measures and apparatus in the country will be highly tested; and they can only be successful when the unconditional support continues for them. The only condition that can be set is the restoration of peace and tranquility; before that, drawdown of the troops may mean isolation of Afghanistan in the quagmire of instability and terrorism.

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An Increase in Militancy

By Hujjatullah Zia

Since the 1980s, Afghanistan has endured the campaign against Soviet occupation, civil war after the Soviets withdrew and the ongoing battle against Taliban insurgents since the fundamental Islamist movement was toppled in 2001. Now, the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) group has posed more challenges and will protract the war in Afghanistan.

There is a sense of fear and mistrust in the air and Afghan locals undergo the bulk of violence and militancy. The Taliban's heavy inroads on the one hand and the IS's insurgency on the other hand will lead to public dismay. The current exodus and economic stagnation reflect the political syndrome.

Afghan women fear a return to the Taliban's time - as their freedom was curtailed on a large scale, the girls' schools were closed and they were excluded from social activities. In other words, the women's rights and dignity were trampled upon and they were deemed an inferior creature.

However, the self-styled Islamic State group's inhuman practices have surpassed the Taliban. It is said that when the Islamic State fighters seized the Mahmand Valley, they poured pepper into the wounds of their enemies. Then, they seared their hands in vats of boiling oil. A group of villagers was blindfolded, tortured and blown apart with explosives buried underneath them.

"They pulled out my brother's teeth before they forced him to sit on the bombs," Malik Namos, a tribal elder who escaped the valley along with thousands of other villagers, is quoted as saying. "They are more vicious than the Taliban, than any group we have seen."

The emergence of the Islamic State - the extremist organization that arose in the Middle East - has ushered in a new age of brutality. This radical group adds a fresh dimension to the contest for Afghanistan's future, a key reason why President Obama is considering a plan to keep as many as 5,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan past next year. Their decrees threaten in some areas to reverse U.S.-funded gains in education and women's rights. And they have made the Taliban, who have also committed atrocities, an appealing alternative in ungoverned regions.

The militants in Afghanistan arose from a different set of circumstances and come to the struggle with a somewhat different outlook. While in the Middle East the group seeks to create a global Islamic caliphate, some fighters here have local ambitions such as re-creating the Taliban's medieval social order, particularly taboos imposed on girls and women, which have waned in many areas since first imposed two decades ago.

Since the withdrawal of most U.S. and international troops in December, the Islamic State has steadily made inroads in Afghanistan. A report last month from the United Nations' al-Qaeda/Taliban Monitoring Team found that the group - also known by its Arabic acronym Daesh - has a growing number

of sympathizers and was recruiting followers in 25 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

Villagers say, "Many with long hair and beards went door-to-door. They ordered villagers to leave their houses and farms within hours. They seized livestock and crops. They shut down scores of schools and Islamic madrasas and destroyed electricity lines and cell phone towers. The fighters included some foreigners from Chechnya and Uzbekistan."

In recent years, the Taliban's oppressive social codes have not been enforced in many areas, as the Taliban tried to win popular support. In some parts of the country, girls are allowed to attend schools. Hard-line attitudes against music have softened. Public executions have been reduced.

Now, Islamic State fighters, led by former hard-line Taliban, are restoring the puritanical way of life in some areas. They have ordered men to grow long beards. Women cannot leave their houses without wearing the traditional head-to-toe blue burqa and must be accompanied by a male relative. Smoking is banned, and shops that sell cigarettes have been shut down.

Afghans fall the victim of the IS and Taliban's strict ideologies as the warring parties have intensified their operations across the country. The Kunduz takeover was a shocking message to the government and now the beleaguered city of Ghazni is at a critical situation and the Taliban have been organized for attack. Targeting central provinces one after another is a matter of great concern.

"On its first anniversary, the National Unity Government's promise of restoring security, spearheading economic development, and transforming the war-torn country into a sustainable and responsible partner with its strategic allies proved to be more political bluster than achievable goal. The economy is stagnating, a brain drain is shaking the country, and Afghan refugees - many of them fleeing for security or employment reasons - constitute the second largest group after Syria. On the front lines, the soldiers are routinely losing some of their best combatants and commanders who could have been saved if provided with leadership, timely reinforcement, and logistics."

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, the Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and their partners in the National Unity Government should be reminded by Afghan history that the current situation is bad and could get worse. If they fail to overcome political differences, the country will fall to the Taliban. The best hope for safeguarding Afghanistan is to support its armed forces.

The soldiers urgently need cohesive military and political leadership, equipment, effective intelligence gathering, and timely reinforcement. Moreover, the key posts, especially the ministry of defense, should no more be controlled by acting heads rather political elites are to be introduced without further delay.

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