

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



October 21, 2015

The Outcomes of War against Terrorism

The tiring war against terrorism that was launched after the incident of 9/11, brought with itself different sorts of influences and impacts on the lives of people in Afghanistan, South Asian region and U.S. in particular and the world in general. The war, though has done much to topple down the Al-Qaida favoring reign of Taliban and has been able to target the mastermind of the incidents of 9/11 - Osama Bin Laden, it has brought with itself a pile of controversies. Though it has certain medals on its chest, the war is considered to have proved very much lethal in some other ways. The resources that have been used in this war have not been considered to have hit the bull's eye and the very reason for which the war was started is yet to be achieved even after 14 years, when the involved nations of the world seem to be reluctant to continue the war and ready to drag it towards a conclusion.

According to a recent report by Equality for Peace and Democracy in cooperation with United States Institute of Peace, Afghanistan's war and the war against terrorism cost the country a staggering USD 9 billion or approximately USD 24,906 million per day. The figure is equivalent to 44% of Afghanistan's GDP. It is approximately 113% of the total of Afghanistan's 2014 national budget, and amounts to roughly four times the Afghan government's revenue collection target for last year.

According to the report, there is an extra budget allocated to the ministries of defense and interior affairs, the national security council and the National Directorate of Security (NDS), Ministry of Defense gets an additional USD 1.5 billion over their annual budget; the Ministry of Interior gets almost USD 1.2 billion extra; National Security Council gets over USD 1.5 million and the NDS an additional USD 200 million.

Though these costs can be considered to be necessary to fight the war against terrorism, there can be measures to tackle the situation and decrease these spending and more budget and efforts can be spared for infrastructural development, health and education sectors.

The most important pretexts to the war were to put an end to the terrorism in Afghanistan and help it build strong political and economic systems so that it can guarantee its survival on the modern concept of democracy. Both the pretexts are yet to be realized to full extent and the international security forces led by U.S. troops will completely withdraw within a couple of years. Neither the terrorist networks have been eradicated from the region nor the political and economic system in Afghanistan are standing on strong footings that can be left alone without much attention and support from international community.

The phenomenon of terrorism has the capacity to grow into strong position from where it is today and can really threaten the region and the world as a whole. Further, this phenomenon is no more an issue only in Afghanistan and has been nourishing in the neighboring countries as well.

Former president Hamid Karzai, in a recent interview to RT TV, said that the United States is not interested in winning the war against terrorism in Afghanistan despite 14 years of combat. He further added that there was more radicalism in Afghanistan and in the whole region than there had been ever before. He said, "That is why I've been calling for a long time now for re-thinking of the strategy in the fight against terrorism; for re-evaluating whether this struggle against terrorism is a failure or if there's a broader issue at hand here that we don't know yet about or we don't understand".

He also suggested, "US and its NATO allies must now begin to consult with major powers and explain it. We must first find out if this has been a failure, but if this is not described as a failure, by the US and its allies, then we need to have explanations from them on what else is the reason."

It is really a crying need of time that the situation in Afghanistan must be reconsidered. Insecurity, mostly promoted by Taliban, has increased than ever before. The future appears ambiguous and the peace process is totally out of shape. The Afghan authorities must understand that the war in Afghanistan has to be ended decisively and that is what the circumstances in Afghanistan and the neighboring countries are demanding. Both the eradication of terrorism and political and economic stability of country have to be made sure before the war is concluded. No doubt, there have been many sacrifices given in this war so far, both in terms of human life and resources, which cannot be taken back, but with a little more effort the outcome of the war can be quite different from what it can turn into if left in the way it is. This war has to be concluded with the victory of peace loving forces against the terror networks.

Will US Residual Forces Tackle the Security Crisis?

By Hujjatullah Zia

Afghanistan faces a long and challenging road to peace, stability and development. But after thousands of lives lost and billions of dollars invested, it is imperative that we do not give up now. We must renew our commitment to supporting the people of Afghanistan on their difficult road to recovery," these words are spoken by the UN's humanitarian affairs operational director John Ging. He further believes that Afghanistan "has a lot of overlapping humanitarian challenges" and as so far this year, about 130,000 people have been displaced in the country due to the ongoing conflict. Despite urgent humanitarian assistance needed, Ging said the funding for action is currently standing at \$204 million USD, which is less than 50 percent of what is needed. He warned the continuous deterioration of the humanitarian situation will likely jeopardize international community's investment of billions of dollars already made in Afghanistan.

In the meantime, U.S. President Barack Obama announced that the current level of 9,800 troops would stay in Afghanistan through much of 2016, and that a force of 5,500 would remain thereafter - ending his campaign to bring home almost all troops stationed in the country. Calling the plan "the right thing to do", Obama acknowledged "Afghan forces are still not as strong as they need to be". Addressing battle-weary troops who may now be forced to return for another tour of duty, Obama said they could "make a real difference" to stabilizing a strategic partner. The decision to change strategy came after a months-long review that was punctuated by the Taliban moving into Kunduz last month and quickly taking over the city.

Following the speech of the US president, the Afghan government, which had earlier insisted on the longer stay of the invading troops, welcomed Obama's announcement.

But on the other hand, The Taliban responded to the US announcement saying they would keep fighting until American troops finally pull out. "They were the ones who decided to invade Afghanistan. But it will be us who decide when they leave," said Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.

Moreover, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned violence in Afghanistan could spill over into ex-Soviet Central Asia, a day after Obama's announcement to keep troops in the conflict-racked country. Reports say that at a meeting in Kazakhstan, Putin and the leaders of ex-Soviet states agreed to create a joint task force to defend the region's borders in the event of a crisis. The deal could pave the way for the deployment of Russian and other troops along unstable Tajikistan's 1300-kilometre frontier with Afghanistan.

"The situation there is genuinely close to critical. Terrorists of different stripes are gaining more influence and do not hide their plans for further expansion," Putin is quoted as saying.

Tajikistan's porous border with the conflict-torn country is of particular concern given the surge in fighting between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Instability in Afghanistan's north, highlighted by the Taliban's brief capture of the strategic city of Kunduz last month, has spurred talk that Russian troops could step in to secure the border.

The "war on terror" and Afghanistan's counterterrorism strategy were proved abortive within the past fourteen years. Despite the sacrifices made by foreign troops and Afghan soldiers and millions of dollars invested to stabilize the country, the unmitigated insurgency has resurfaced and Afghan people suffer as ever before. Taliban's heavy inroads in central provinces, including Kabul, demonstrate their reorganization. Apparently, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, Omar's successor, is backed to engineer and spearhead terrorist attacks in Afghanistan. As a result, rumors said earlier that Mansour travelled to Ghazni province for a week to lead a strong attack - which was soon suppressed by Afghan soldiers.

It seems that the scenario of Iraq is repeating in Afghanistan. Following the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, violence and bloodshed increased and civilians, including women and children, were changed into sacrificial lamb. After all, a new fundamental group namely the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) was formed in a sudden and mysterious way - which has changed Iraq into a battle ground. Finally, scores of U.S. forces returned to combat militancy but there is a little hope for a successful mission.

The Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) was a great hope for a better Afghanistan. Afghan nation, including their representatives who attended Loya Jirga to decide about signing the security pact, urged the government to sign it with no delay. People believed that this would prevent from the repetition of Iraq's scenario in the country. However, it failed to fulfill the public expectation. The U.S. decreased the number of its troops and the security is critical. Besides the Taliban's heavy attacks, the self-styled Islamic Stage group has gained a foothold in Afghanistan too. Therefore, the U.S. announced to keep only few numbers of its forces in the country.

Compared to a large number of foreign forces who fought in Afghanistan, it is believed that the new announcement is unlikely to put a successful effect on security situation - this is what the Iraq situation reveals. Moreover, since this announcement has prompted the Taliban to react stronger, the violence and insurgency will continue unabated.

However, keeping a number of U.S. troops would be effective if they take active role in combating terrorism and intensifying airstrikes against Taliban and Islamic State group rather than playing only the role of trainers or advisers. So, to stabilize the country, foreign troops have to fight alongside the Afghan soldiers.

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The Vulnerability of our Children!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

Qasoor incident in Pakistan was alarming for all the parents who came to know about this sad and tragic incident. In a small village near Qasoor city, a group of criminals raped more than 150 children. The barbarous act continued unabated for almost two decades until it got the attention of media. This was a lucky village as there may be many more children, both in villages and cities, who might be the victim of such insane people. According to media reports, the criminals used to take pictures or film the children during this shameful act. This revelation did not make it a simple case of some villagers raping some children due to their lust and sexual desire but an organized group of criminals who might be working for local and foreign pedophiles who buy such pictures or videos on huge sums.

One after the other, different revelations about child molestation and sexual abuse adds to the worries of parents. The cases of 70s and 80 when children were sexually harassed, molested or abused in different boarding and catholic schools of England and a number of other European countries are also frightening. A number of such cases have recently been made public and media reports that there may be many more that are still in the dark due to the fear of their victims.

In Western countries and a small part of Muslim countries as well, the situation of gays is also alarming. In fact, gays also show an abnormal and unnatural trait in sexual relations and it is not far when child molestation may also get the backing of law and legislation. Luckily, we have hardly heard about any gay case in Afghanistan but then we have another shape of this problem. In last few years, Afghan media reported many cases when young boys were kidnapped, raped or murdered by certain criminals. In the same way, the country was in shock after the cases came in media that very young girls, as young as 3 to 5 years, were raped and murdered. It doesn't mean that all these started in last few years; in past there was no media to expose these crimes. In USA, and a number of European countries, special task forces have been established to bring into justice the increasing number of groups that are working to make porn videos or take pictures of children and then these videos and pictures are traded. It has become a huge business as the number of paedophiles is dangerously increasing. These criminals have established vast networks in which they target children of different classes and use different techniques to allure them for their heinous and shameful activities. Due to the increasing access of children to internet and social networking sites, the vulnerability of children has increased. In the same way, the trade of porn videos and pictures of children has also increased and different governments are working to break these networks and catch the criminals. World famous Indian actor, Aamir Khan also discussed this issue in his television talk show of Satyamev Jayate. He gave message both to the parents and children in this regard. He asked the chil-

dren not to remain silent and bring it to the notice of parents whenever they are treated abnormally by anyone at home, or in relations, or at school or at any other social setup. He asked the parents to be close to their children so that they should be confident to confide their secrets and tell them about everything in their lives. Most of the cases of child molestation or sexual abuse happen when children are threatened or blackmailed and the frightened child does not dare to share the problem with anyone in the family.

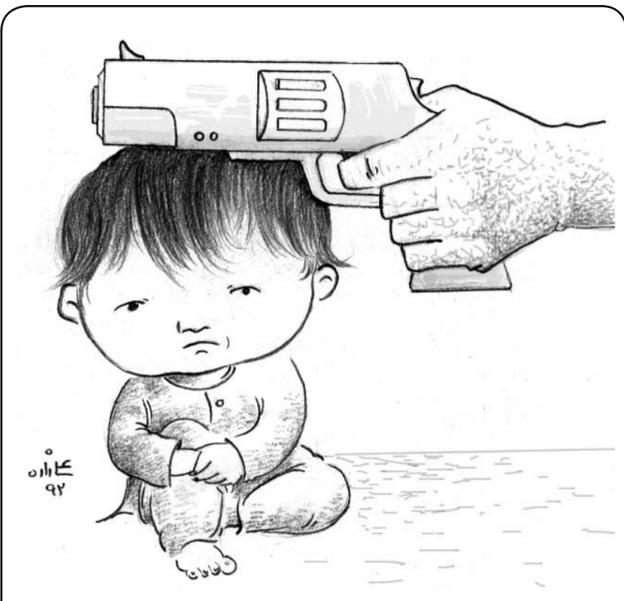
All these facts are distressing. It is a fact that sexual abuse or molestation in the childhood destroys the personality of the person forever. He loses his social confidence, stops trusting anyone, which greatly affects his or her professional career, and overall, his personality remains incomplete. At many occasions, he may avenge the society and become a serial killer. In short, the victim of child abuse carries with him or herself a burden of psychological complexities, which follows him like a dark shadow until the death.

It is a fact that the world is getting a dangerous place regarding child protection but the remedial solutions are also not far-fetched. Many researchers have found that the root cause of this problem lies in weak family relations. In families, where parents keep shouting on each other and children long for peace and love, the atmosphere in family may not be attractive for the child. This may cause the child to seek love and peace somewhere out of the family and he may fall prey to those who look for such children. We are lucky that we have a culture and traditions in which parents are strongly bound to each other and divorce is rare. In the same way, we do not have any concept of parents living separately. It is needed that both the parents should show tolerance and understanding in order to keep the bound of family strong. It lies as a responsibility on both of them to keep the atmosphere in the house pleasant and loving so that children should get all the love from inside the house and family members. Being parents, we need to give more time to our children and show interest in their activities so that we should be fully aware of all their activities and likes and dislikes. We also need to keep them busy in healthy activities like books, painting and others and this can only happen when we will first do it ourselves and be a role model for our children. Family is the first social group of a child and according to social sciences, if a child gets enough attention from the first group, he remains closely attached to this group and the impacts of other groups in his life is minimized.

We also need to educate them to inform their parents if somebody touches their sensitive organs or parts or behaves strangely. We need not to be shy in this case as it is for the sake of safety of our children. Along with this, we can work to build their characters on strong basis and once again, character development begins with parents.

In all these cases, the role of parents is the most important and being parents, we need to fulfill our duties.

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