

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



October 25, 2016

## The Governed are More Important

In today's world almost every society has a government and the subjects – the ones who can be termed as the governed. Much of the discussions pertaining to political philosophy and political science has been one how the governments should function and what characteristics they should have. While, there is a little discussion about how the governed should be and how they should behave and live in a state.

This discussion is important because the current societies are different from the earlier ones to a large extent. The earlier societies used to be based on monarchy, oligarchy, aristocracy or dictatorship; therefore, most of the authorities were with the government and they were rarely accountable to the governed. As a result, it was important to discuss the nature of the government and the governing individuals or the leaders.

However, as the societies have evolved to democracies, they have experienced more participation of the governed in the matters of governance. They have more say in the formation of the government and they can, in certain ways, hold the government accountable for different policies and actions.

One of the best ways to influence the government is the process of election, which was not an option in monarchy, aristocracy or dictatorship. Through elections the governed can choose the leaders of their choice. Moreover, the modern societies have developed modern media that highlight the different actions and policies of the government and bring them into the attention of the masses; in certain cases, they even help in assessing those actions and policies. Meanwhile, the modern media, itself, is highly dependent on public opinion. It can shape or be shaped by views and thinking of the people. So, the thinking, feeling and emotions of the governed become very important.

Thus, it is important to have discussion on the governed, not only on the government, and what qualities and characteristics they should have so as to flourish a better society. There are certain important characteristics that must be there in them in this regard. Most importantly, the masses in a state must be educated and aware because both education and awareness would make them understand the society and their status, roles, rights and responsibilities in it. Though education is debatable, awareness is indispensable, as some would believe that formal education supported by the government may make the people more loyal to the government instead of making them independent individuals who would be able to analyze the government and its policies critically and have the capacity to bring about important changes in the society.

Awareness is majorly based on experience and open-mindedness. Though it is very difficult to achieve awareness without education, it is not impossible. The governed must also be vigilant and must have an active part in the affairs of the state.

They must not be dumb and deaf subjects as in that way their rights would be easily violated. There are political scientists who believe that the rulers are basically the people who gain authority in order to defend their own interests. They are not always interested in what the common masses get; rather their attentions are diverted more towards their economic benefits.

Therefore, the masses must be vigilant to identify the policies of the government that are not intended to bring prosperity to them. They have every right to fight for their rights politically and must make sure that their rights are not violated in any way. In that manner they would be able to stop the rulers from using the authority only for their personal benefits.

Political consciousness is another important quality that the masses must develop so as to comprehend the developments and the changes in the political system. Through such a consciousness they would also be able to gauge the policies of the government as per the political demands. Furthermore, they would gain the capacity of strengthening the political institutions and enrich the political culture with democratic and positive elements.

They would, at the same time, be able to exert for positive political changes through their voting power, the tendency to change, participation in political affairs and, at most, through democratic demonstrations and protests.

Countries like Afghanistan would also require concentrating on the characteristics of the governed as well. Unfortunately, the common masses in Afghanistan have not been able to gain the attentions. They still lack basic requirements of life and suffer from lack of awareness and consciousness.

Therefore, their roles are very limited in Afghan society and mostly the rulers rule the country as per their will. Even if the rulers have the policies that are detrimental for Afghan people and Afghan society and are contradictory to the wellbeing of the masses, they do not face much opposition as the masses are not able to identify them and insist on the changes through political means.

## Putting Pressure on Taliban

By Hujjatullah Zia

Following the ebb and flow of peace talks between Afghan government and the Taliban, the talks have resurfaced in national and international media. Meanwhile, the civilian fatalities increased on a large scale. With the death of Mullah Akhtar Mansour, who was killed in May in a US drone strike, the negotiation of peace came to a standstill and the Taliban intensified their attacks which resulted in high combatant and non-combatant casualties and ended the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG). Subsequently, the relation between Kabul and Islamabad soured as the officials ushered in blame game.

Afghan President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani said at a NATO summit in Warsaw that Islamabad did not fulfill its commitment regarding the peace talks. "Our regional initiatives with neighbors are beginning to yield significant cooperative dividends. The exception is with Pakistan – despite clear commitments to a quadrilateral peace process; their dangerous distinction between good and bad terrorists is being maintained in practice," Ghani is cited as saying. Furthermore, Afghan officials claimed frequently that the Taliban militants, mainly their high-ranking leaders enjoyed safe havens in Pakistan.

However, Pakistan has denied harboring the Taliban elements and suggested resuming peace talks the only viable option for peace and security in the country.

Pakistani officials said that they would support Afghan-led and Afghan-owned talks and still reveal their willingness for facilitating the talks. But the trust between Kabul and Islamabad declined to its lowest point.

It is likely that Pakistan is able to use its "leverage" to put pressure on the Taliban elements so as to come to negotiating table since the Taliban's headquarter and "most of the Taliban's leaders", mainly Mansour's successor Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada. As a result, the Doha-based Taliban official said Pakistan was taken into confidence about the Qatar meetings, but they state Pakistan recently arrested some senior Taliban commanders to show its displeasure at being left out. A Taliban member reportedly said that Pakistani security agencies had raided a madrasah in Quetta and arrested another Taliban commander, Mullah Abdul Samad Sani.

"We do not know what is going on but this is second time during the past two months that Pakistani authorities raided a madrasah in Quetta to arrest senior Taliban member," the Quetta-based Taliban is quoted as saying. Therefore, it is said that a delegation from the Taliban's political office visited Pakistan over the weekend to brief Pakistani security agencies on the Qatar meetings and complain about the recent arrests of its senior commanders. Hence, this reveals the fact that in case of being marginalized, Islamabad will use its "leverage" to be involved

in talks. It was reported earlier that the Taliban elements had held informal meetings with Afghan and US officials in Qatar, without the presence of Pakistani representatives. The Taliban sources said Mullah Omar's brother Abdul Manan participated in the talks but there was no breakthrough toward resuming formal talks. In one of my commentaries, I pointed out that the resumption of talks, which leaked to the media did not seem to be formal since Afghan officials, including the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, expressed unawareness of its details. Moreover, the Taliban have not decreased their insurgency in the country and Haibatullah is yet to comment over the issue.

Addressing a press conference after his trip to Saudi Arabia, CEO Dr. Abdullah Abdullah said, "I do not know details over government's peace talks with Taliban in Qatar." Believing that most of the Taliban's leaders were based on Pakistan, he added, "Taliban's trip to Pakistan is not news because they are there and carry out all their activities from there."

It is believed that exchanging harsh rhetoric will aggravate the challenges and the time is not ripe to persist on the sore point. As the Taliban have decaled willingness for direct talks, Pakistan is not supposed to play the role of whistle-blower but has to support the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned talks, as it has constantly claimed. In other words, it is time for Pakistani officials to build trust and prove its commitment through using its leverage in favor of talks.

Whenever, the talks between Afghan government and the Taliban approached a sensitive point, a whistle-blower emerged and ruined the whole process. Perhaps, the revelation of Mullah Omar's death was one of the strongest possible blows to the peace talks and put the process to the deadlock. Reeling from Mullah Omar's death, the Taliban intensified their insurgency and carried out indiscriminate attacks in Afghanistan. To resume the negotiation, the Taliban will have to stop violence and bloodshed. In a nutshell, declaring peace talks on the one hand and increasing militancy on the other hand seems no more than a game – which has been played for years without a tangible result.

Pakistan's influence on the Taliban elements is undeniable and it is likely that Pakistan put pressure on the Taliban, through arresting their leaders, to let it engage in the talks. After all, it is time that Kabul and Islamabad bridge the gap and pressurize the Taliban to hold genuine talks. It is hoped Taliban succumb to the calls of Afghan government for negotiation and Pakistan supports the Afghan-led talks. It is worth mentioning that if this round of talks be the repetition of the previous stages, it will be as fruitless as ever.

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## Kabul: Irritating and Dangerous Traffic

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Kabul is the axis of political, commercial, cultural, educational and social life in Afghanistan and the fifth fastest growing city in the world. Because of insufficient basic services and lack of a decentralized government policy constantly people moved to Kabul and other cities. This caused Kabul to be one of the most overcrowded cities. The traffic jam has become a never-ending challenge that neither the authorities nor the residents of the city can resolve. The urgent vehicles such as ambulance, fire brigade and patients are hardly possible to reach their destination on time. Likewise, school students, public and private personnel also other citizens often stuck for several hours behind traffic crowds. The working vendors, carters, porters and parked vehicles that often occupy half-side of the roads in some parts just intensified this pressing issue. In addition, growing noise pollution, accumulation of garbage and overall the chaotic traffic system has taken comfort from Kabul residents.

In addition to overgrowing population, non-compliance with traffic rules, heavy machinery such as trucks and buses, lack of standard traffic infrastructure, large number of hawkers as well as the increasing number of vehicles automatically deteriorates the traffic situation. Let's not forget the omnipresent potholes, bumpy roads, and pedestrian overflow that further cause frustrations and delays. According to statistics provided by relevant authorities annually 30 to 35 thousand vehicles newly enter Kabul city while the mayor's office had estimated that there are already 700,000 vehicles on the narrow streets of Kabul, which can only accommodate about 30,000.

Traffic management is extremely poor ever since could not bring significant changes in past 15 years. Roadside assistance such as traffic signs and facilities are rarely seen. Vehicular traffic is disorganized and must contend with numerous pedestrians, bicyclists and each other. Comparing certain ethnic residential area to others are not built equally and balanced. People always complain about discriminations which frequently lead to tremendously social hatred and angers. With congested roads and abundant pedestrian traffic vehicle accidents are a serious concern and can escalate into violent confrontations. In brief, effective steps are not taken towards traffic infrastructure and management. All people have to tolerate the pressing condition and all drivers need to drive defensively with paying close attention to their surroundings.

People are extremely unsatisfied but often keep silent because of being hopeless; some drivers blame the Traffic Policy officials for charging illicit fines and asking for bribes. According to some drivers, Kabul Traffic Police have reputed accusations of improper fines and bribery, explaining that most people are not aware of the regulations for drivers and so they are in frequent violation. "Traffic [Police] causes us problems, they ask for a License and our cars' documents in every square, and when we show them, they make up an excuse about how your

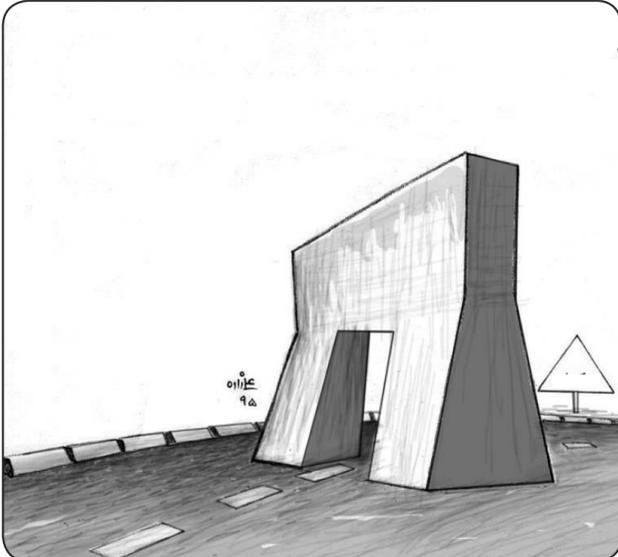
car is overloaded. Many blame high-ranking governmental authorities who block the city's roads while commuting from one side of the city to another mainly due to security concerns. When one road is blocked, the city turns into a bedlam, where all the vehicles, no matter where they are headed to, have to be on the same road. This is something that the residents of Kabul city have to tolerate, as the security situation of the high-ranking government officials is a priority. Meanwhile, Traffic Police officials accuse the drivers of lacking driving etiquettes. It would not be surprising to see cars moving against traffic on one-way streets, ignoring traffic lights and driving recklessly fast. Nevertheless, with virtually no signage, few traffic lights and no lane demarcation, it is hard to hold individual drivers or Traffic Officers entirely responsible for the unruly nature of driving in Kabul.

In brief, there are different kinds of challenges to Kabul transportation system mainly relating to government centralized policy, poor traffic management, unmapped settlements, infrastructure, corruption, environmental pollution and etc. Based on aforementioned problems the following are some of suggestions could be proposed to the officials:

(1) KPTD (Kabul police traffic department) has to craft effective strategy for the control of all illegal, unregistered & old cars throughout Kabul city. And remove unnecessary check points/ blocks in city. (2) The working vendors, carters, porters and parked vehicles must be managed. (3) KPTD and police complained about the government employees (parliamentarians, ministers, relative of ministers, directors etc) are more frequent violators of rules. So government employees will need to cooperate, traffic police in sense to follow traffic rules. (4) Flyovers and subway are helpful in reduction of traffic problem, so it will be in appropriate location, because very few people use it and more people do not use due in appropriate locations and poor engineering system. (5) Very few cars parking in city of Kabul compel the drivers to park their cars anywhere.

So it is necessary for government to construct suitable cars parking in suitable places of Kabul city. (6) Inadequate traffic police were also one reason to control the congested traffic system of Kabul city, so there is need to hire new police for control of congested traffic problem in Kabul city. (7) To rebuild as well build new traffic signals throughout Kabul city. (8) To facilitate the work in progress on roads network, and construct all roads in important part of the Kabul city. (9) Due to Lack of adequate employment opportunities, basic utility services in remote provinces, decentralized policy and further extension of Kabul city can be the most important strategy to the endless challenges. (10) Like other countries, establishment of a new roadworthy directorate can be a good solution to old smoke producing cars.

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