

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



October 25, 2017

Community Development Must Serve All

In recent years there has been a fresh concern with life at the community level. This concern has arisen as a result of expression of social forces in the lives of groups and people throughout the world. But because of the different stages of development or diverse ways of life, in many countries these social forces manifest themselves in various ways and create what appears to be quite a different set of problems.

In those countries where industrialization and urbanization are relatively well advanced, the focus of concern is the loss of community as a meaningful form of social and moral association. The current popularity of such words as disorganization, disintegration, decline, insecurity, breakdown, instability and the like have relevance to trends in the community life in industrialized countries.

In the less developed or developing countries, on the other hand the problem has a rather different focus. In these countries one finds relatively cohesive communities, closely knit kinship systems and intimate inter-personal relations. But powerful political, economic and social forces are at work stimulating these countries to shift their politico-economic systems so as to make them responsive to economic development by adopting modern techniques of work and living. These forces have been at work since the post-World War II period or earlier and were accelerated by substantial aid programs of some of the major advanced countries and the United Nations assistance programs. It has been increasingly recognized that the imposition of modern techniques on ancient cultures may destroy old values, create disruption and lead to problems which exist in all large urban centers. So there is a serious concern as to how communities in less-developed countries, like Afghanistan, may be stimulated or helped to adopt new techniques that may lead to greater economic productivity and provide better food, shelter, health and education, with the least disturbance or destruction of most of the original values relating to the traditional ways of life. If such a movement is to take place it is recognized that the community as a whole must make the adoption to the new socio-cultural environment.

There is generally some misconception regarding the meaning of community development. People mostly believe that simply the construction of more roads, schools and hospitals or an increase in agricultural production and improvement of cattle breeds is the essence of a community development program. This conception cannot be denied that physical achievements are the only visible contribution of the program and are simply undertaken to encourage the people living in communities to join the program whole-heartedly. In the real sense community development is a conscious, deliberate and organized effort to bring new man-made environment in the long run. So community development aims at both material and nonmaterial changes in the society. Thus, the community development should aim at bringing balanced changes in the patterns of culture of the people living in a community. A community development program should bring the people living in a locality on a single platform to inculcate among them the spirit of self-help, responsibility, self-respect, initiative and confidence.

It is necessary under this program to cultivate among the masses the ability to understand their problems, solve them mostly within local resources, or if necessary to approach the government administration to provide them technical and financial aid. Community development as defined by the United Nations is a process designed to create conditions of economic development and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and fullest reliance upon the community initiative. The main assumption behind the concept of community development is that local resources, leadership and initiative if organized by innovations can find out the solution of local problems and such efforts can be positively correlated with national development.

The specific programs under community development may include improvement in health, agricultural production, education, income, housing, handicrafts, industries, marketing, means of transportation and communication, public utilities and creating or maintaining an atmosphere of primary groups. To achieve these objective changes in the behavior, beliefs and attitudes of the member of the community are required to have active participation from local population for making community development or organizational program a success.

And these are the considerations that should be kept in mind while designing and carrying out community development programs in Afghanistan. The externally designed development programs, without keeping in consideration the actual issues at the community level and without involving and engaging the people of the community and enabling them to make proper use of their own resources, are bound to face failure or they may only provide a temporary solace. The actual, permanent and lasting changes can only be made possible when the community starts understanding and learning the art of depending on themselves and addressing their problems in their own ways. Definitely, a community would require external support in certain cases, but that support should always remain a support it should not become the main player in the development of community development programs.



How the US New Strategy Will Come to Fruition?

By Liaqat Ali Amini

The declaration of US policy about Afghanistan was encountered with national and international reactions and all construed it on the basis of their personal interests. A number of states said that the US new strategy was distinct from the past and deemed it positive. Afghanistan also welcomed the new strategy and called it a positive step in combating terrorism and a warning for the militants' regional supporters.

This strategy contains significant points including the responsibility of Afghanistan. In the past, if the country did not play a pivotal role in combating terrorism, alongside the foreign troops, and sustained little financial and political support, now it is no more so and the situation has been changed. New capacity is in the offing for Afghanistan so that the country could work alongside the US to implement this strategy. The country should play its financial, political, and military role in a clear way. The US will not shoulder all the responsibilities by its own and wants Afghanistan to operate with America side by side. In addition to avoiding interference in country's domestic issues and rejects nation building, the US will work for all-round reformation for the betterment of Afghanistan. The support will not be a "blank check" and all the aid packages will be scrutinized so as to ease achieving the ultimate goal.

Afghanistan seems to be more responsible than ever before in terms of supporting its international allies, mainly the US, strategically. The country will have to move committedly; adopt an effective mechanism for backing its allies; declare its support in economic, political, and military fields with the establishment of a commission; and define its political cooperation clearly so that there be no ambiguity.

One of the distinctions of the US new strategy is that it goes beyond the Afghan border where the fate of war and peace is shaped. Defining Pakistan as a supporter to terrorists and India as a hotbed of civilization, peace, and democracy is a productive view to regional peace and stability. Considering the realm of this strategy's influence, the schedule for the strategy was not set.

That is to say, although the military forces were bestowed full authority in carrying out air and ground operations for eradicating terrorists wherever they are, setting a schedule was deemed detrimental policy.

The policy of US regarding Iraq and Afghanistan during Barack Obama's administration was called a strategic error. The hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan constitutes a

vacuum which will be filled by terrorists forthwith. Declaring its strategy about Afghanistan and South Asia, US President Donald Trump said, "As we know, in 2011, America hastily and mistakenly withdrew from Iraq. As a result, our hard-won gains slipped back into the hands of terrorist enemies. Our soldiers watched as cities they had fought for, and bled to liberate, and won, were occupied by a terrorist group called ISIS. The vacuum we created by leaving too soon gave safe haven for ISIS to spread, to grow, recruit, and launch attacks. We cannot repeat in Afghanistan the mistake our leaders made in Iraq."

The United States seem very determined to implement its new strategy and target terrorist militants with strong force. Trump said that his country had been paying Pakistan billions of dollars, but it was housing terrorists whom the US soldiers are fighting against. He added that it ought to change, and change immediately.

The trip of NATO and Pentagon officials following the declaration of strategy reflects Washington's strong determination in enforcing its policy in Afghanistan and South Asia. US Secretary of Defense James Mattis insisted that Taliban's supporters should stop helping the group and coordinate with the policy of the international community by understanding Washington's will.

The US new strategy put Pakistan in a cul-de-sac. Although China, which is a close strategic ally to Pakistan, supported Islamabad in some ways saying that Islamabad was in the front line in terms of combating terrorism and paid heavy sacrifice in this respect. Pakistan officials are highly discontented with the US new strategy. Increasing the role of India in Afghanistan and South Asia will never be acceptable for Islamabad.

In fact, the presence of the US forces in Afghanistan is really crucial. In the past, when America declared the full withdrawal of its forces, many countries, including Russia, opposed this issue. It is because Russia, China, etc. will know that combating terrorism without US is problematic and the regional stability will be at stake.

In short, the new strategy is an appropriate opportunity for Afghanistan. Afghan government will have to struggle to use this opportunity in a right way. Afghanistan must plan an effective security mechanism and intensify its attacks against terrorist networks. Moreover, committed and skilled individuals should be appointed in security sectors.

Liaqat Ali Amini is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Mounting Violence in Myanmar

By Hujjatullah Zia

Violence against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar - also known as Burma - continues despite the international condemnation. Women and children, who are highly vulnerable to the issue, carry with them lugubrious stories. They are treated with humiliation and their human rights and dignity are trampled upon. Life has changed into a real nightmare for the Rohingya. The systematic violence carried out by Myanmar security forces is called ethnic cleansing - the claim which is denied by the Myanmar government.

An overwhelming body of published accounts has detailed the Myanmar Army's campaign of killing, rape and arson in Rakhine, which has driven more than 600,000 Rohingya out of the country since late August, in what the United Nations says is the fastest displacement of a people since the Rwanda genocide.

Myanmar Buddhist majority treat Rohingya Muslims as pariahs and spread hatred and propaganda against them and hide the facts about the cruel practices of security forces. For instance, the country's social welfare minister Dr. Win Myat Aye is cited as saying, "There is no case of the military killing Muslim civilians. Muslim people killed their own Muslim people". Even the name Rohingya, which the ethnic group has identified with more vocally in recent years, has been taken from them.

The Myanmar government usually refers to the Rohingya as Bengalis, implying they belong in Bangladesh. In popular videos, extremist monks refer to the Rohingya as "snakes" or "worse than dogs."

Public sentiment against Muslims - who are about 4 percent of Myanmar's population, encompassing several ethnic groups, including the Rohingya - has spread beyond Rakhine. It is said that in 2015 elections, no major political party fielded a Muslim candidate.

Today no Muslims serve in Parliament, the first time since the country's independence.

The ethnocentric mindset and practices of Buddhist majority in Myanmar has outraged the conscience of the entire nation. There is no doubt that ethnocentrism is highly destructive in human society. The Second World War rooted in ethnocentric mentality and racial superiority. When an ethnic group is treated with contempt and their rights and freedoms are violated on the grounds of their race or religion, war and violence will emerge forthwith. In fact, "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts" within the human history.

On the other hand, "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

To have a peaceful society, a nation will have to exercise

tolerance and cherish the idea of peaceful coexistence. All nations in a society have equal rights and dignity and have to be treated equally.

However, when one is segregated or maltreated, the stability of that society will be at stake. Now it is believed that the political stability of the Myanmar will be jeopardized and perhaps militants and terrorist groups will target Myanmar for their cruel practices against Muslims. Similarly, Buddhists might come under attacks in other parts of the world. Hence, this is a politically egregious error of Myanmar government.

To show a reaction against Myanmar government, the US is reportedly considering sanctions against Myanmar authorities for its "violent, traumatic abuses". According to reports, Washington may use a human rights law to target leader or groups involved in the violence in the western state. The US State Department said it has already cut off travel waivers allowing current and former senior military leaders into the country and was considering further actions to impose economic measures against those responsible for atrocities against Myanmar's ethnic minority.

The department added that all military units involved in operations against the Rohingya were ineligible for American aid.

The US government last imposed sanctions on Myanmar in 1997 when it was under a military dictatorship. Following a transition toward democracy, the measures were lifted in October 2016 by then president Barack Obama.

The punitive measure of the US will mitigate the issue to some extent. Only offering condolence or feeling regret will not be a panacea for the ongoing sufferings of Rohingya. Similar to the US policy, all states will have to show reaction towards this issue, which is called ethnic cleansing by the United Nations. Imposing a worldwide sanctions against the Myanmar government will be a right strategy in this respect.

The fact is that violence against Rohingya Muslims is self-destructive and will destabilize Myanmar in the future. What if Rohingyas are armed and return to Myanmar to take revenge? Hence, government will have to stop violence to strengthen the spirit of brotherhood to have a peaceful coexistence and a stable state. In brief, such practices, which are against the international instruments, will not only blacken the reputation of Myanmar officials but will jeopardize the life of Buddhists in other parts of the world and put Myanmar at risk.

Today, masking the fact will not be possible and government officials must not spend their energy in this regard. Additionally, nothing can justify the discrimination and inhuman acts of Myanmar security forces. So, such practices should be stopped so as to avoid the consequences.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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