

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



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Media's Role in War Against Terrorism

Media has a vital role in democratic countries. Its role and its influence have been so much tremendous that now it is considered as one of the pillars of the state. It is believed that in modern democracy, media keeps an eye on legislature, judiciary and executive and at the same time scrutinizes their policies and their undertakings. Therefore, they have an opportunity to reconsider their undertakings and try to amend themselves as required.

However, for this to happen, it is necessary that media should be independent and must not be dominated by the government. Apart from scrutinizing the government media has an imperative role in developing public opinion and at the same time providing timely information and knowledge. Today's modernized media has the capacity to reach the people 24 hours and provide them information in real time.

There are a large number of people in the world who are influenced by the bewitching effects of media. TV's, computers, newspapers and magazines, radios, mobile phones, tablets and many others, all are the parts of modern media and reach billions of people every day. Therefore, underestimating the role of media would be a fool's errand.

Though media's function in daily life is already significant, its role during the era of instability, conflict, war and different movements becomes paramount. Because of this fact, the different parties to the conflict try to use it for different sorts of propaganda and thus persuade the people to favor their perspectives. The independent and unbiased role of media during such an era will definitely make the whole world see the truth, while its biased role may bring more miseries and injustice.

Considering the influence and the role of media in the modern world, it is really important that it should have a very responsible and wise character. Misinformation and too much sensationalized and dramatic versions of the truth may deviate the people away from the path of the truth and they may start believing untrue as true and may even play a role to further dominate the truth. Afghanistan has been one of the countries that have been dominated by instability and conflict. The role of media in Afghanistan has been felt to be very much vital, but unfortunately, it has been developed only in the last decade. Today, it is claimed that Afghan media is independent, yet there are many issues that have to be dealt with to really make it free and independent in the true sense of the word. At the same time, the international media active in Afghanistan has also played a role that cannot be neglected at all.

The role of media, both national and international, in the last decade, especially in the era of war against terrorism has been very much important. It has disclosed to the people the real nature of the war and the parties to the conflict. It has brought to the people, the events and the incidents with their details and their horrors. Analyzing these incidents and events, it would not be difficult for the people of Afghanistan to understand their true enemy and friend. It is also crucial that media must make the people know about their true enemies and their true friends so that they must be able to choose the better between them.

The media reports and the analysis have clearly shown to the people of Afghanistan that they have been highly influenced by Taliban and Daesh, and their actions. Though, they have been the victims of the war as a whole, the role and activities of Taliban have proved to be more deadly for them. Recently, the media reports have clearly depicted that most of the civilian casualties have been because of Taliban. It is because of Taliban that Afghanistan has an image of an extremist nation with no respect for moderation and democracy.

However, there is an important aspect of the fact that has not been properly handled by media and that is the truth as a whole. The truth in pieces, promulgated both by national and international media have caused certain misunderstandings as well. They have not been able to declare the war against terrorism as a war against terrorism in true sense. The war against terrorism simply means that there are two parties to the conflict; first party is the moderate Afghan culture and their supporters in international community and the second party is composed of the religious extremists - the Taliban and other extremist religious groups.

It is important for media to see the truth as a whole and try to understand the political tricks that are played by the politicians. It is not the duty of media to pursue the wills of the politicians, but to provide people with unbiased and complete truth. The complete truth is that Afghanistan has been influenced by hardliner extremists, who have no respect for moderation and are the real party to the conflict in war against terrorism. It is not important what they are termed as; the important factor is what they do and what they want.

Pursuing the truth as a whole is the only way through which media can support the common people in understanding the scenario around them and their real friends and enemies, which is very important to make better decisions for the country as whole.



Controversy in Election Commissions

By Muhammad Hedayat

To view Afghanistan's security crisis as a critical issue before the Afghans' collective life, the challenges of elections which manifested itself in a strong way will emerge in upcoming election once more. If the government does not manage election process and commissions in a right way, there is a possibility either the election will not be conducted or will be held with strong controversy. In this case, the elements of country's political system will be harmed and mending this will be ambiguous.

Within the past days, a controversy in the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and Independent Electoral Complaint Commission (IECC) emerged. Afghan President dismissed head of IEC's secretariat and the head of IECC dismissed five key members of his staff. The process of electoral reform has been extremely slow and difficult since the public lost their trust in commissions, there was no enough sense of trust between ruling political factions within the government's body, and there were also a myriad of legal and technical challenges. In any case, this period elapsed quietly within the two past years - as the National Unity Government (NUG) was established.

After the establishment of electoral reforms that was stipulated in both electoral law and executive structures of the commissions, the commission should have paved the path for holding election. The significant issues that commission were supposed to do are: providing the list of voters, determining nationwide polling stations, providing financial expenses of elections, and reforming the administrative field of commission across the country.

After a year, electoral commissions are unlikely to have achieved their single objectives. Since the appointment of commission members, not only have none of the above objectives been fully developed, but they have also been engaged in bitter ethnic and factional controversies. In the past, if these controversies were done behind the political smoke screen, it was not secret within the past year as members of electoral commissions exchanged harsh rhetoric against one another. After a year, a destructive turbulence has emerged in electoral commissions and the smoke of this flame will go into the eyes of both state and nation. Government also seems exhausted from this issue. Hence, the heads of the NUG should manage the issue within the commissions.

Basically, there are manifold challenges in political and technical fields which seem to be the main reason behind the slowdown of electoral commission's tasks. Members of electoral commissions could not only fail to attract the national and international trust, but also lost the government's trust.

No pressure is placed on electoral commissions by political leaders or leadership members of the government. The individuals were agreed upon by heads of NUG from the beginning. But the political and fundamental problems in all Afghan agencies and institutions are the structural chal-

lenges rising from the discriminatory and monopolistic policies of the past. When political problem is discussed, it means that the past narrow-minded ethnic and factional structures have infected the minds of the public, including the country's managers and politicians. Election commissioners are not exception, either.

In the past year, their conflicts, which had political roots, were revealed to the masses. The attitudes of some members of commission also rooted in the past and they acts more like the representatives of a certain group rather than senior managers with having the political fate of the country in their hands.

There are lurid pieces of reports about the deeds of some members of commissions that will be revealed in the future. Such practices have led to the disappointment of the masses and government. Based on political independence, commissions have no problem.

Those who were appointed in a transparent process under the supervision of representatives from the Wolesi Jirga, Meshrano Jirga, Supreme Court, AIHRC, civil society organizations, and women's organizations, can proceed with electoral process in accordance with country's laws and electoral law. However, the contingency mental structures of new commissioners had impeded a prolific and reliable task up to now.

There are many challenges in the technical field of electoral commissions. That is to say, if there were legal and political problems in the beginning of electoral reform, now technical problems have emerged stronger.

Since the elections of Wolesi Jirga and district councils in the next year are a fundamental need for the legitimacy of country's political system and since the opportunity to build different electoral mechanisms, as well as the fundamental changes in the law and the current commissions, is not possible, urgent or temporary solutions should be considered to maintain the administrative order and stability of the electoral commissions. The most significant issues that will support the government in the upcoming election are as following:

(1) Establishing a temporary supervising commission: Based on article 64 and item 20 of Afghan Commission, president has the authority of establishing commissions to improve administration of the country in accordance with the provisions of law. Hence, a commission comprised of relevant institutions, mainly those institutions that have the authority of supervising the process of appointing commissioners, should be established. (2) Dismissal of employees who have committed violations and corruption. If monitoring board carries out a thorough examination of commissions' work, or if there are grounds for violations and corruption of members or staff of electoral commissions, dismissing them is an appropriate solution in the current situation.

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The Nonstop Bloodbath

By Hujjatullah Zia

The recent series of attacks have filled Afghan nation with an outpouring of grief. Histrionics surges up among the public in the wake of unmitigated insurgency and there is no respite from deadly offensives. The annals of history show that Afghanistan has been steeped in violence and bloodshed for more than three decades that led to heavy casualties. Life is still cheap in the country. Considering the recent escalated insurgency, Afghans have a horrible premonition that bloodier scenarios are imminent.

People are inundated with messages of condolence by officials, which has created a schism between state and nation. Almost in every suicide bombing, a throng of people, including women and children, are killed or amputated in cold blood. However, officials simply accost the militants to stop violence and bloodshed and offer messages of condolence to victims' families, which has ended the bonhomie between state and nation and officials are not deemed resourceful enough for not being able to protect the rights and freedoms of the public.

With the establishment of democratic society, following the downfall of the Taliban's regime, Afghans dreamed of a civil society and utopian world, but their dream did not come true. The reason behind the endorsement of Afghanistan's Constitution, which was approved on January 03, 2004, was stated in its preamble as to "establish an order based on the peoples' will and democracy; form a civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination as well as violence, based on rule of law, social justice, protecting integrity and human rights, and attaining peoples' freedoms and fundamental rights; strengthen political, social, economic as well as defense institutions..." Thus, people sought solace in democratic and human rights discourse believing that it would heal their bleeding wounds. Nonetheless, the inchoate democracy was not a panacea for their problems and the pregnant silence was a harbinger of violence and carnage. Subsequently, the lull in insurgency ended as the Taliban guerilla fighters resurfaced in the country and jeopardized the life of civilians. In short, although approving constitution and conducting presidential and provincial elections for forming a democratic community were a landmark in the history of Afghanistan, the process of democratization was hampered by scourge of war.

After all, Afghan High Peace Council (HPC), which was entrusted with jostling the Taliban for holding talks, could

not achieve its objectives. The Taliban played a foul game and now refuse to sit through negotiation. So, the peace process was proved abortive and the Taliban militants intensified their attacks in recent weeks. That is to say, terrorist attacks were increased following the meeting held in Muscat, Oman's capital, two weeks ago, which shows the Taliban's lukewarm response to negotiation. On the one hand, the Taliban scoff at peace process, but on the other hand, Afghan officials persist on it - which seems very naive of the government.

It is believed that peace process put state and nation on a collision course. Afghans do not concur with the government's decision to insist on talks since there was no tangible result in this regard. Neither admonishing nor imploring the Taliban will give the desired result. Thus, the government had better stop this fruitless game, to use euphemism, or inane game, to be blunt. Almost seven years have elapsed from the establishment of HPC, but only the former Jihadi and head of Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) Gulbuddin Hekmatyar joined the peace process. Afghans are no more sanguine about the outcome of peace talks since the tortuous path of peace talks is highly murky as the Taliban never stop their acts of terror.

Afghan civilians have been changed into sacrificial lamb and the flagrant violation of their rights is a serious blow to democracy. They were in the throes of conflicts in spite of the establishment of democratic state. Although Afghans cherish a voracious desire for peace and stability, the Taliban outfit seeks to impose their own preconditions with the barrel of gun. It is self-explanatory that the "smile diplomacy" of Kabul government did not come to fruition in the face of Taliban's belligerent strategy.

To safeguard the rights and freedoms of the nation, Afghan government, along with its international allies, need to dismantle the Taliban's network and its safe havens. It is an incontrovertible fact that the Taliban's radical ideology is anathema to amicable negotiation and they cannot reconcile their mindset with friendly attitude. Therefore, the Taliban seek to pressure Afghan government through inflicting casualties upon soldiers and civilians. The tragedy of Afghan nation will continue unabated unless a strong military action is taken against warring parties, mainly the Taliban. With the intensified attacks of the Taliban, forming a civil and democratic society seems no more than a dream that will never come true.

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