

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



September 18, 2016

Democracy and SDGs

September 15 was celebrated throughout the world as International Day of Democracy. The day was basically designated by United Nations through the resolution A/62/7 in 2007 and at the same time UN General Assembly encouraged the governments of the world to 'strengthen national programs devoted to the promotion and consolidation of democracy'. The theme for the Day this year was 'Democracy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.

In September 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is a plan for achieving a better future for all, laying out a path over 15 years to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect our planet. At the heart of the Agenda are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call for mobilizing efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Among these SDGs the most pertinent is SDG 16, which addresses democracy by calling for inclusive and participatory societies and institutions. It aims to "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." And, that should be guideline for the countries that are striving to achieve a stable democracy.

Afghanistan is also struggling in the journey towards democracy. It is important for the country to stick to the essentials of democracy and try to achieve them in the best possible manner.

Democracy requires not merely an absence of ignorance but also that the citizens are adequately educated. Proper education will produce a wise leadership and a vigilant public and 'Eternal vigilance is the price of democracy'. If knowledge remains scanty, fragmentary and confined to narrow circles and if the mass of humanity remains steeped in ignorance and error, there can be no prospects for the success of democracy. Education makes citizens vigilant and also gives them the boldness to criticize government measures which are ill-conceived or harmful. In fact, education produces wise leadership and an enlightened and alert public.

No two human beings can ever think alike, it is natural to come across dissenting opinions at every step, in every field. True democratic spirit lies in overcoming dissent through discussion and persuasion and not through coercion. In a democracy, views are not imposed, views are shaped and molded. Democracy inculcates among the people the habit of tolerance and compromise and teaches them to show due regard for the opinions and sentiments of others.

A free and fair press is another vital necessity for democracy to flourish. It ventilates public opinion and enables the government to frame policies in the interests of the masses.

The newspaper acts as a kind of liaison between the government and the people. It acquaints the people with the policy and principles of the government. At the same time, it reflects the public reaction to this policy and thus enables the government to modify it. Since it gives such extensive publicity to the movements of the ministers and other higher-ups, it exercises a very sobering influence on them. It does not let them forget that they are in office as the representatives of the people to whom they are finally answerable. It keeps a powerful check on the corruption and tyranny of the government.

For the health and efficiency of a democracy, an effective, vigilant and working opposition is indispensable. Strong opposition exercises a healthy restraint on the ruling party and prevents it from subjecting the people to arbitrary and despotic rule. No free large country has been without political parties. None has shown how a representative government could efficiently work in the absence of strong political parties. Effective opposition saves a country from turmoil; it safeguards it from coup d'état. If the party in power neglects public welfare, the voters can oust it and give power to the opposition. However, the competing political parties must not forget that a sense of responsibility and a desire to give topmost priority to public interest against party interest would certainly boost the image of the democracy in the public eye. On the contrary, lack of discipline and constructive approach inevitably leads to instable confusion and reversal of economic progress.

It is now quite a few years since we embarked upon a democratic experiment. Today, when we make an appraisal of our democracy, we find it still lacking in certain important requisites. A large majority of our people are still illiterate. Glaring disparities between the rich and the poor not only persist but have become accentuated. There is no economic security; food is scarce, poverty appalling and unemployment rampant. Ethnicity and class exclusiveness still haunt our minds! Provincial and linguistic differences still create distrust and bitterness. The masses also lack civic probity. Corrupt and dishonest administration is eating into the very vitals of our democracy.

Democracy can only flourish in our country when the true essence of democratic values and culture is understood, implemented and practiced devoid of discretion of any sort. Accordingly democratization of society would lead to a prosperous country and people.

The New Normal; an Ever Increasing Insurgency

By Naser Koshan

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

Afghanistan is witnessing an unprecedented stream of Taliban offensive in the last two years, very casual, fragmented insurgent activities confined in certain southern provinces, has spread drastically in relatively stable northern provinces. This along with other potential threats has become the new normal for the country's citizens. It is a sad reality that people have become accustomed to witnessing and experiencing terror, losing loved ones, and hassling with endemic poverty over the years in Afghanistan. It is always expecting the worse in that part of the world, and the political leaderships have done little to none in changing this new normal to a better normal for its constituents. Alarming as we speak, there are military operations underway in 23 of 34 provinces, which have had meager to none efficacy on the overall security spectrum. Afghanistan is again on the brink of losing a major province to insurgents, which will only add to the misery, mass destruction and internal displacement of the indigenous population. We clearly recall the devastating aftermath when Taliban captured the strategic northern province of Kunduz. As dictated, they looted banks, indiscriminately killed civilians and burnt state and private infrastructures to the ground, causing millions of dollars in damages to private and public sectors equally.

No doubt insurgents enjoy both safe havens and potent financiers within and outside the country, they have cunningly modernized and enhanced their recruitment and procurement procedures, they are easily benefiting from illicit drug trafficking and the smuggling of the country's precious metals to neighboring countries. On the other side, the Afghan army is experiencing serious flaws in its hierarchical management, resulting in a huge number of personnel fatalities on the battlefield. They lack a key component of a winning strategy in any guerilla war that demands institutional discipline, and efforts to dry up your opponents' financial backbone at its core.

Evidently terrorists do not own banks or weapon factories, they are state sponsored and emanating from somewhere, to succeed curbing this menace, a clear regional approach besides raising the issue of their finances, safe havens, and recruitment mediums is required on the international podiums. Understandably, the NUG in Afghanistan given its current political and economic heterogenous setup and mishaps, is putting reasonable effort to prevent a possible footprints for IS and other insurgent elements and their ability to establish permanent training grounds in the country, but in a coalitional set up, the commander in chief, (the president) does not have the autonomy to proceed and speed up certain decisions unless consulted with his coalition partners. This lengthy process of decision-making at prevailing circumstances has halted the effectiveness of acquiring tangible results on the battlefield and good governance.

Historically post any internal unrest, the Afghan leadership has been outrageous and vocal enough to quickly shift the blames on the neighboring Pakistan, and somehow alleviate the growing public outcry. Unfortunately, since the establishment of the interim authority in 2002, the preceding and the prevailing Afghan leaderships

have failed to address, and find a credible solution to curb illegal movements along the long stretching border between the two countries, and gradually put an end to the growing anger and frustration resulting in worsening of the bilateral relations between the two nations with an even direr economic repercussions for both sides. The question here is why do countries become hostile towards each other? Under any circumstances, a country is primarily tempted to disrupt peace and provide safe sanctuaries to that of its neighbors rogue elements, is either having a disputed borderline or a futile economic advantage in its neighbor's internal turmoil. Bear in mind that insurgency at its core affects the national sovereignty and political stability in the region, no responsible state would write off a regional approach to preclude this growing menace reaching their respective borders. Afghanistan as a weak and economically dependent country directly requires an ever closer cooperation with its close and distant allies to plan, execute, and eventually neutralize any safe havens within its domain. Sadly, conflict ridden states are struggling with a large array of domestic problems and a growing public demand for better life and employment opportunities, which in turn adds to the already stockpiled dilemma of balancing focus on these given fronts. Initially the NUG particularly the president, put a tremendous effort to bring a regional harmony in tackling insurgency in the region, and effectively presented Afghanistan as a victim of terror that is unable to fight this costly war on its own, but in a coalitional set up, agreeing on issues far exceeds sensible time frames, resulting in a vacuum of military leadership and systematic military operations against the insurgents across the country.

Despite having experienced a devastating history of civil war based on prejudice and ethnic cleansing, Afghan leaders have always been infected with an endemic hatred phenomenon of prejudicial approaches. Nepotism and ethnic hegemony among all resident ethnicities in the country have paved the way for state enemies to exploit and further destabilize the country. Unfortunately, incurring a loss of fifty young soldiers on average, fighting with empty stomachs, stolen allocated ammunitions, and other equipments do not ring any danger alarm to the leadership at all. We should not forget that governments are elected by people to serve their interests. In a democratic set up it is the people that keeps the executive power in check, and through their representatives, they can depose and impeach their leaders if proven negligent and ineffective. Unfortunately, in mal functioning bureaucracies, democratic process are rigged, real representation is meager, and very often personal interests and suppression substitute the very legit aspirations of the country's citizens. Last but not least, the NUG in Afghanistan has a moral obligation to act upon fulfilling their campaign promises, and facilitate the platform for people centric, broad based, and mutually agreed reforms at its earliest. Unlike, foreign countries, the Afghans are quite forgiving and easy going when it comes to their elected officials' deliverables and unhealthy actions, thus they have to respect their patience and appreciate their civil obedience. Perhaps less confrontation and accusation and more pragmatic approaches and

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North Korea's Nuclear Test

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

North Korea conducted its fifth and the biggest nuclear test last week and said it had mastered the ability to mount a warhead on a ballistic missile, ratcheting up a threat that rivals and the United Nations have been powerless to contain. Under 32-year-old third-generation leader Kim Jong Un, North Korea has sped up development of its nuclear and missile programs, despite U.N. sanctions that were tightened in March and have further isolated the impoverished country. According to experts, this was North Korea's most powerful nuclear test so far. They say the seismic magnitude and surface level indicated a blast with a 20- to 30-kilotonne yield or it's the largest to date. Such a yield would make this test larger than the nuclear bomb dropped by the United States on the Japanese city of Hiroshima in World War Two, which exploded with energy of about 15 kilotons. South Korea's military put the force of the blast at 10 kilotons, which would still be the North's most powerful nuclear blast to date. The important thing is, that five tests in, they now have a lot of nuclear test experience. According to reports, The Pentagon will deploy the U.S. Air Force WC-135, a modified Boeing aircraft, to collect air particles and any debris in the atmosphere and confirm the nature of the test.

The blast, on the 68th anniversary of North Korea's founding, drew a fresh wave of global condemnation. The United States said it would work with partners to impose new sanctions, and called on China to use its influence as North Korea's main ally to pressure Pyongyang to end its nuclear program. The United Nations Security Council strongly condemned the test and said they would begin work immediately on a resolution. The United States, Britain and France pushed the 15-member body to impose new sanctions. U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon urged the group to remain united and take action that would "urgently break this accelerating spiral of escalation." U.S. President Barack Obama said after speaking on telephone with South Korean President Park Geun-hye and with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe that they had agreed to work with the Security Council and other powers to vigorously enforce existing measures against North Korea and to take "additional significant steps, including new sanctions. While Sanctions have already been imposed on almost everything possible, so it seems that the policies are at an impasse. In fact, the means by which the United States, South Korea and Japan can put pressure on North Korea have reached their limits.

China said it was resolutely opposed to the test and urged Pyongyang to stop taking any actions that would worsen the situation. They said would lodge a protest with the North Korean embassy in Beijing. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying would not be drawn, however, on whether China would sup-

port tougher sanctions against its neighbor. South Korea's Park said Kim was showing "maniacal recklessness" in completely ignoring the world's call to abandon his pursuit of nuclear weapons. Russia, the European Union, NATO, Germany and Britain also condemned the test. "U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter called for a redoubling of international pressure on North Korea and singled out the role he said China should play." "It's China's responsibility," he told a news conference during a visit to Norway. "China has and shares an important responsibility for this development and has an important responsibility to reverse it."

North Korea, which labels the South and the United States as its main enemies, said its "scientists and technicians carried out a nuclear explosion test for the judgment of the power of a nuclear warhead," according to its official KCNA news agency. Pyongyang's claims of being able to miniaturize a nuclear warhead have never been independently verified. Its continued testing in defiance of sanctions presents a challenge to US president Obama in the final months of his presidency and could become a factor in the U.S. presidential election in November, and a headache to be inherited by whoever wins. "If the U.S. and other hostile forces persistently seek their reckless hostile policy towards the DPRK and behave mischievously, the DPRK is fully ready to cope with them with nuclear weapons any time," the director of the North Korean Atomic Energy Institute said, using an abbreviation of the country's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Now North Korea enlisted itself in the list of top nuclear power countries of the world after a long strive against some other nuclear powers. It is ranked at 9th number in the list of top 10 nuclear power countries in the world. They first tested the nuclear ability in 2006 and became one of the nuclear power countries of the world. The top 10 nuclear power in the world consist of orderly: The United States of America, Russia, France, China, United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea. At number 10 there is not only a single country but a group of countries which are having probably equal nuclear resources. These countries include Germany, Turkey, Belgium, Italy and Netherlands.

These countries are ranked at 10th number in the list of top 10 nuclear power countries in the world. These countries have many disadvantage and advantages in case of defense, peace and war. They have the modern nuclear weapons which can destroy the whole world and no nations dare to attack on them. Many of them are producing electricity from nuclear power plants. They can also produce new machinery to develop their country. But, they can also damage the whole humanity. It can kill the millions of people in just a minute.

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