

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



August 04, 2015

The Functions of a State

While living in a state, the people expect and expect rightly that they should be provided their basic requirements of life by the state and the government. In the modern concept of state, protecting the basic rights of the people and providing them the requirements to live a better life are considered as the basic functions of a state. As a matter of fact, the functions of a state, to a large extent, depend on the end it pursues. There was a time when the state performed very limited functions and was primarily concerned with the maintenance of law and order and protection of the country from external aggression.

However, in the modern times the nature of the state has undergone complete transformation. It is no longer merely a police state performing very restricted number of functions. On the other hand the functions of the state have enormously expanded and it has been transformed into a welfare state, which tries to perform maximum of functions, depending on its resources. The growing popularity of the socialistic ideas and increased interdependence of the states of the world have also contributed to the increase in the functions of the state. However, the functions actually performed by various states differ from each other depending on their ideology and the resources at their disposal.

There are two very important categories of the functions that the states of world require to perform - the Compulsory Functions and the Optional Functions. The Compulsory Functions of a state include: (1) Maintenance of law and order within the country. For this purpose each state maintains a police force and keeps a watch on the disruptive elements. It protects the life and property of the citizens. (2) Formulation of laws and maintenance of law courts to settle disputes amongst individuals and individuals and state. Those who are guilty of violating the law must be brought to book. (3) Protection of the country from outside aggression. For this purpose each state maintains an army. It also tries to maintain friendly relations with other countries through exchange of diplomatic envoys.

Some of the basic Optional Functions include: (1) Regulation of trade and industry including control of coinage and currency; fixation of weights and measures, issuing of trade license, regulations of imports and exports and other matters. (2) Provision of education and establishment and improvement of educational institutions. (3) Maintenance of hospitals and dispensaries and remedial measures to prevent the spread of diseases so that citizens should have healthy lives. (4) Maintenance of works of public utility like the posts, railways, roads, public libraries etc. (5) Promotion of agricultural and irrigation facilities. (6) Provision of social securities, like old age pension, unemployment allowance etc. (7) Raising the moral and social standard of citizens through necessary social reforms. (8) Recreation of the citizens through managing cinemas, radios, parks etc.

Looking at the list mentioned above we can say that Afghanistan needs to do much regarding both the compulsory and optional functions. As a result of decades of instability and socio-economic and political problems, the Afghan people have been suffering from myriads of problems. Though there have been certain important improvements made in the last decade or so, some very concerning issues still exist that threaten the lives of the common people of Afghanistan. There are claims that changes have been brought within Afghan society; however, it should be noted that if the effectiveness of the changes have to be felt or observed, they should be observed by the changes in the lives of the common people. If there is any change in the condition of living of the common people as the outcome of the change; the change should be guarded for and even backed and supported vehemently. If not, either the claim must be discarded as wrong or the efforts should be improved to make the changes effective. And that is what Afghanistan needs to do - it has to improve its efforts to bring about necessary changes in the lives of the common people that have been jeopardized both by insecurity and lack of rudimentary requirements of life.

Insecurity alone is not the only trouble for the common people of Afghanistan. There are many other problems as well that haunt their lives and make them miserable. Some of the problems are directly linked to insecurity like, people are not able to have access to health and other facilities of life. Moreover, development works to improve the standard of living of the common people are not carried out because of the security threats, thus the desired objectives are not attained in this regard. People, in some parts of the country, are not able to have access to education as well. Schools are shut by force and the school going children are irritated. There have been many cases of poisoning the schoolgirls that have discouraged the people to send their girls to school. So the insecurity is affecting the common people in two ways - it is taking their lives directly, and indirectly, it is keeping them away from the rudimentary requirements of life.

The government is the institution that, on behalf of the state, makes sure that these functions are achieved. The government of Afghanistan, therefore, needs to make sure that the common people of Afghanistan are provided their basic requirements like food, cloth, shelter and security and other important requirements of life like education, health facilities, job opportunities and other facilities.

The Persisting Security Challenges in the North

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

The intensive anti-insurgency operation in the north is becoming a protracted campaign against the insurgent groups in a large swath of the country, eroding the government's ability to contain the insurgency. While the government is struggling to tackle the growing insecurity across Afghanistan, intensive fights are unabatedly going on in the northern part of the country. According to local officials in Faryab and Kunduz provinces, more 70 insurgents are killed during recent fighting between the Taliban and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). According to officials, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have had gains in the fight against Taliban fighters, recapturing villages in Kunduz provinces that had recently fallen to Taliban fighters. In the meantime, ANSF have repelled a Taliban siege on local resistance forces in Takhar province. The government was forced to send reinforcement after over 50 local resistance forces were caught in a Taliban siege for several days.

With the insecurity persisting in Northern provinces, the anti-insurgency campaign aimed at improving security in the north is gradually becoming ineffectual. It was expected that the operation launched against the insurgent groups in Kunduz, Faryab, Badakhshan and other northern provinces would change the situation in a sooner time. However, the security limbo in the north is indicating that the challenge is far more challenging for ANSF. Taliban have been able to temporarily take some grounds in Northern provinces while the ANSF have been in a defensive state, struggling to repel Taliban assaults in Northern provinces. Despite that the Afghan National army and police forces have performed remarkably in keeping the militant groups at bay in the north, the anti-insurgency strategy of the government has not been effective in defeating the recent resurgence of the Taliban in the north. The Taliban's spring offensive has been aimed at making the most possible gains including taking grounds in provinces like Kunduz and other provinces in the north. The momentary gains for the Taliban have created an uncertain situation in the north and a sense of victory for the Taliban.

This year is proving a difficult year for ANSF who have taken full security responsibility in the country after NATO ended its combat mission in Afghanistan this year. The north has been sliding into a chaotic situation while other parts of the country are facing new threats from militant groups including the newly emerging group of Islamic State. This is while there is a visible lack of leadership for improving security at the highest levels of the government. The government has been unable to efficiently lead the fight against the Taliban offensive. Despite that the security officials believe this year would be 'the year of survival' for Afghanistan, the government has been unable to devise and implement a comprehensive transitional security and anti-insurgency strategy for defeating the Taliban offensive launched early this year. More im-

portantly, since formation of the National Unity Government, the Afghan army has no minister to efficiently lead the military in fighting with the Taliban.

With the deterioration of security situation in the north, the first Vice President Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum went to the northern province of Faryab to coordinate the government operation and local resistance against the Taliban. The local resistance forces fighting the Taliban play a key role in supporting the government-led military operation against the militant groups in the north. The government needs to support the local grassroots resistance against the Taliban and provide equipment and weaponry to the militia forces to effectively fight the Taliban and help containing the insurgency in the north. Vice President Dostum's presence in the north is an incredible opportunity for the Afghan military and the local forces fighting the Taliban to help coordinate government efforts with the local resistance groups fighting the Taliban. If the government efficiently leads all security stakeholders in the fight against the Taliban including the army and police forces, local police and resistance groups, the security situation would quickly improve.

There is no hint in the recent developments for the leadership of the Taliban for quicker resolution of Afghanistan's conflict or a decline in the armed conflict between government forces and the insurgent groups. Ironically, Mullah Omar's death may not be a good news for the Afghan government's war and peace efforts. Just before the news of Mullah Omar's death, the Taliban sat face to face with an Afghan peace delegation for the first time in last fourteen years. Now with the uncertainty in leadership of the Taliban, the prospect for a peace deal with the militants is even more uncertain and imaginably unattainable. The new leader of the Taliban has warned of intensifying the 'jihad' in Afghanistan, saying that the Afghan government's peace efforts are false. The recent Taliban peace-related flexibilities and the warning of the new Taliban leader are signs of confusion and uncertainties among the Taliban leadership as well as their stance on the peace efforts of the Afghan government.

The confusion regarding the Taliban leadership and the future of peace talks would directly affect the security situation in the country. If the Taliban refuse to come to table of negotiations, there would be a further prolonged war against the Taliban and other militant groups. The militant groups have had some gains in the north this year. Given the uncertainty regarding the peace process, the Taliban might further intensify their offensive in the northern part of the country. A war of erosion could potentially undermine government's ability to contain the insurgency in the long run if the government fails to boost its anti-insurgency strategy for a transitional period. Taliban's focus in the north is aimed at long-term victories which would give the militant groups a strategic ground of activity and a safe haven to operate in for the coming years. The security challenge in the north requires a more resolute will from senior leadership of the government to tackle the situation in the north.

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Violation of Right to Freedom

By Hujjatullah Zia

The vulnerability of right to freedom is certain in our society. One's liberty is curtailed to a large extent and instability poses a serious threat to individuals' life. The infertility of democracy in Afghans' prolific land is a matter of concern. Fundamentalism and ideological stereotypes inflict irreparable loss upon our nation. The day-to-day violation of right to life and liberty makes the national and international news. Furthermore, unnecessary social and cultural barriers aggravate the problem. Freedom has been construed and practiced in many ways in our society. Some folk exceeded social boundaries and ethical codes and interpreted freedom to be a situation free from all restrictions. Others practiced their lives within the frame of cultural norms and moral values.

Abraham Lincoln puts it as, "The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as his liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act, as the destroyer of liberty. Plainly the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of the word liberty; and precisely the same difference prevails today among human creatures."

We have been longing for freedom voraciously. Freedom to express our thoughts, to act without restrictions, to walk without boundaries, to do what we want without the mood of being told to do what is right. In other words, freedom has mostly been misconstrued; empty of moral values and responsibilities. We have walked to freedom, however, "made missteps along the way" without admitting. Moreover, we did not only make missteps but also went the wrong way feeling a great disdain to ask a guide the way to freedom.

I believe that freedom is normally tailored to human societies on the basis of their social mores and cultural norms. For instance, a secular society will not favor a freedom within the religious frame and vice versa. Similarly, American-style freedom will be in serious conflict with the freedom agreed upon by Afghans - on the grounds of cultural and social varieties. However, freedom from violence, cruelty, honor-killings, etc. will be agreed upon collectively, since they are based on moral standards, regardless of one's race, color, beliefs and so on.

We have failed to remember that "with freedom come responsibilities." Whenever we claim for liberty, we have to shoulder a series of responsibilities in the society. In other words, there is a limitation for freedom. Besides using our rights, we are responsible to respect the rights of others. So, we are supposed to use our

freedom in the frame of law otherwise we will trample upon others' rights. Nelson Mandela puts it as, "For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

Much is said about freedom, but little is done to bear the desired fruit. Despite the democratic system, people suffer from lack of freedom in one way or another. Lack of tolerance regarding others' race or beliefs is a motivating force behind violation of right to freedom. In other words, one's blood is spilled simply on the basis of ideological, racial and sexual issues. This really outrage men's conscience.

A large number of women are chained in the frame of unnecessary cultural restrictions. Some believe that the four walls of kitchen are far more honorable for a woman than engaging in social activities in public places. Traditional beliefs, which stem from lack of knowledge, hold stronger sway in villages. To put it succinctly, a number of women are bereft of their right to freedom and live under the subjugation of their male partners. After all, their dignity is highly prone to transgression and some fall the victims of honor killings every once in a while - and the perpetrators usually go unscathed from prosecution and fair trial. Hence, some women are doomed to bear the brunt of restrictions within the confines of home. Their heads are banged on the wall, their lips are lopped off for the oral protest against their male partners and they are used as a punching bag to live an obedient life.

War and violence are great factors behind curtailing the public's social freedom. One is not sure how the fate will play with him/her while getting out of home for daily activities. A student may lose his/her life on the way to school or university, a workman will die in an untoward explosion, a family's bread-winner will be amputated in a bomb blast and a commuter will suffer the same fate on the way to work - these are part of daily life in Afghanistan.

These issues do not necessarily belong to physical restrictions, but people also suffer from lack of freedom of thought and freedom of expression. The burgeoning violence against journalists and reporters demonstrate the same fact. They live a critical life for uncovering an ugly issue - mainly regarding an influential person. I have no doubt about the sterility of democracy in the country.

Thomas Jefferson puts it succinctly: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness, - That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the Governed...."

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