

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



August 09, 2018

Political Instability in Afghanistan: The Root Cause and Alternatives

Political instability is one of the core problems of Afghanistan. There have been arguments about the main causes of continued political conflicts in Afghanistan. However, what mainly has not been explained in the many analyses is the fact that in most cases of all the case of political instability in Afghanistan, it is evident that the major problem is leadership. In this context, Afghanistan has seen its freedom fighters and heroes turn into dictators, while robbing the natural resources, politics of exclusion and deprivation to tip the balance of power has steadily continued to dominate the public sphere.

To-date Afghanistan is still haunted by historical injustices and oppressive structures that were conferred on to the foreign backed leadership in the past. As a result, it is an aspect that informs the weak institutions of the state, inconsistent legislative systems and unvarying struggles for political power to the detriment of the well being of the nation, which could have moved on path of development as part of modern societies. While the regional community, especially the neighboring countries, whose geo-security and resource interest seem to benefit from the status quo in Afghanistan, has not been pro-the establishment of functioning systems and strong governments in the country, as a substitute, their involvement, continue undermine Afghanistan's stability through the militarization of conflicts, by creating and using different Islamic militia groups, for accumulative purposes.

However, political instability in Afghanistan owes much of its cause to internal factors. Thus, the interpretation of internal and external factors especially geo-political and economic interests of the international and regional community constantly play a determining role in undermining the processes of social development in Afghanistan. Considering such factors as unequal development, poverty, disease, violence and the manipulative tendencies of the local elite, political and economic stability in Afghanistan is always under threat. Not surprisingly, such threat is not arising from within the country but from external interests whose thirst for our resources, continue to form the dynamics in areas related to governance. Resources in Afghanistan if well managed are capable of providing fully for its population. However, it is crystal cut that stolen wealth from Afghanistan usually ends up in banks abroad.

Administrative scholars argue that, the existing institutions of the state and how they function are problematic in the context of Afghanistan. Though institutional frameworks are available to guide processes and delivery on essential services, the continued weakening of these institutions, through political mechanization and traditional nature of Afghan elites, working in cohorts with external interests also leads to further undermining of stability in the country. This inclination intensifies wars, ethnic rivalry, and electoral violence. Indeed, many developments and events might give the impression that Afghanistan is still drifting, but there are also positive signs taking place in the country and the drift needs to be analyzed from several perspectives that capture both positive and negative occurrences and what informs the direction of these events. Evidently, there are pull and push factors, which maintain forming the internal motivators in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, Afghan people have not remained static, even though there are many retrogressive tendencies. They have made great advancements, including their level of political awareness and popular participations in political processes. The wide spread corruption, including political corruption and electoral frauds have not succeed to disappoint them. On the other hand, the leadership dilemma and many other governance related malpractices have been challenged more and more from within, as people begin to understand the broader implications of bad politics and the consequences of governance structures that are oppressive and unjust.

Afghanistan has experienced political instability more than four decades. There have been constant debates that the root cause of the continued political instability exists out of the Afghanistan. But the bitter truth is that it owes much of its cause to internal factors and bad governance is the heart of different conflicts including the political one in the country. As a result, bad governance has weakened the governments in Afghanistan that not only has paved the way for the external interferences in the country but also has made the Afghan governments to be dependent on the foreign powers and not the Afghans.

Role of Political Parties in a Democratic System

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

A political party is an association formed by a group of people who share the same ideas about a country's governance. Every citizen holds a constitutional right to organize with like-minded citizens to form a political party and to attain some common political goals. The right to form a political party is derived from the constitutional right of association, free speech, and equal protection. A political party is a voluntary association formed out of the free will and consent of those who created it. A political party upholds certain principles regarding public policies of a government. A political party seeks to attain and maintain political power within a government. So, political parties can play essential roles such as opinion-making, acting as a watchdog introducing candidates, bridge between government and people, and propose useful political programs.

In the other words, every citizen can participate in this process - by freely acceding information about political issues, by openly expressing the own opinion on public affairs, by formulating expectations, proposals or requirements without fear of repression, by voting in elections, by engaging in civil society organizations or political parties, or by standing up as a candidate in democratic elections. In this way, democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Unfortunately, the political parties which are the central institutions for a modern democracy have not been formed yet in Afghanistan. The current parties are more likely, to a personal business firm heritable from a father to the sons and grandsons. However, the new Afghanistan's constitute enable the political parties to operate openly and this is for the first time in history that they are fully legal but they never have performed their role and function as it was expected, somewhat, like modern society. In modern political system, they should exercise an important function in a democratic system as a "watchdog" of government policy and as a political alternative in the future, and expected to express itself on all issues relevant for government. Parties are expected to propose views on domestic and foreign policies, economic and social policies, and youth and civil policies etc. In order to meet these requirements, each party should have certain platform and programs.

Legally, the parties are inherent to the political system, but in practice they remain outside it, or at least relegated to the sidelines. Their strength has never been measured by full and unhindered participation in elections. This has prevented any 'natural selection' based on voter mobilization or the number of votes received, that usually curbs the number of political parties - which is seen as excessive by many in Afghanistan. In fact, political parties have no factual place in the system; as a result of an election they hold a place as individuals since Karzai era. they maximum serve as voter mobilization machines during times of election, while, in between elections, they drift back into insignificance and hold no influence on their leaders' politics. Additionally, this has led to

the emergence of a two-class party system, with some parties (or rather their leaders) within this parallel system and all other parties outside of it.

This is particularly the case in the parliamentary elections, where candidates are free to identify themselves as members of a certain party (although many do not), parties as such are unable to play an official role. Most significantly, in the current electoral system, which is individual-based, parties cannot field lists of their candidates, there are no parliamentary seats reserved for political parties, as in other countries, and parties are not allowed to establish factions in parliament. The latter provisions, even more paradoxically, have never been laid down in any legislation, yet they are still adhered to.

Based on these and lack of transparency, it was very late when officials from Afghanistan's mainstream political parties reiterated calls to the Afghan government and the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to pave the way for them to play a greater role in the election process. These parties threatened to suspend their cooperation with the IEC if the election management body failed to address their demands. They alleged that the IEC has been playing a double game in dealing with political parties. The election strategy for political party participation was sent to government, the international community and the IEC months ago, but to date, no action has been taken, officials said. According to officials from these parties, discussions were held with President Ashraf Ghani. They said Ghani was not focused on the issue.

The election commission meanwhile said the political parties' demands have been lodged too late but they will put all possible measures in place to prevent electoral fraud. They said instead of boycotting elections, political parties should cooperate with the commission in monitoring the election process. "The voter registration process has some problems and challenges, but in total I can say it will be transparent," IEC commissioner Sayed Hafizullah Hashemi said. According to the IEC, so far around nine million people have registered to vote in the upcoming parliamentary and district council elections. Out of this, details on about 250,000 voters have been entered into the voter database. The IEC said they have not picked up any irregularities as yet regarding this process.

By and large, without political parties, a modern representative democracy is not conceivable. Only, the parties ensure that the citizens are permanently capable to act politically. They articulate and integrate different interests, visions and opinions. They are also the main source for the recruitment of political elites. On the other hand, political parties are not able to play a constructive role in the country unless they start the reforms from themselves. Political parties should not be formed on the basis of sectarian criteria but merely on the basis of national and meritocracy.

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammadzahirakbari@gmail.com

Afghan Government Should Regulate Religious Teaching Institutions and Places of Worship to Avoid Exploitation (Last Part)

By Mohammed Gul Sahibbzada

Religious affair is a sensitive area which policy makers and politicians in third world countries avoid to handle.

But it is the one major area that should be regulated. Madrasas and Masjid have lost their intrinsic meaning in Pakistan. That fateful, country's - Pakistan - intelligence agency has used these two most important pillars of Muslim society as tools at their hands. Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) has skillfully manipulated thousands of students they enrolled in these unofficial madrasas, and instilled them with heretic religious theologies. They were kept in, and brought up in toxic environment where their so called teachers or preachers thought them who to kill. Afghanistan has no controlled border with Pakistan, and the same students who were trained, brought up and equipped with toxic mentality have been sent back in Afghanistan to work as Mollahs in villages, districts and communities in mostly un-governed areas or where Government writ is hardly felt.

These areas are run by tribal system in Afghanistan who offers no opposition to people who purport themselves as Mollahs or religious leaders. This is how ISI exploited population in Afghanistan. These so called Mollahs have poisoned rural people's mentality through speeches and Friday Sermons, and started recruitment of young rural people to fill up and buttress Taliban insurgents' and other religious fanatic groups' ranks.

The result, within six to eight years of complete evaporation of support to Taliban from Afghan society, their ranks started to fill up, their activities increase and now! They got hold of almost forty percent of the entire country's geographic landmass! It is a shame for policy makers - both at national and international levels - to whose oblivion - all this happened. And now, both the Government of Afghanistan and international community - including the US and NATO member countries - are pleading for peace - due to urges at their home nations' changes in policies and priorities - without paying serious heed to possible fallout of such careless engagement in peace process. Things are not in black and white as the interlocutors of ongoing peace process seem to look at things. I hope they do understand all the undercurrents kept by neighboring Pakistan throughout these negotiations.

The Government of Afghanistan should put in place a viable

and enforceable mechanism for complete evaluation and overview of the religious schools system in Afghanistan.

This should include complete vetting of the teachers and religious leaders both in Mosques and Madrasas, and validate their record by local community leaders, which should also include verification of reliable connection of these people to tribes or community of their kinship in the areas they dwell. In addition, educational background check, which should accompany with stringent test of the depth and scope of religious knowledge of the teachers and religious leaders, who are to be assigned for a job in Madrasas or Mosques in rural Afghan communities. Ministry of Religious Affairs and Hajj is the most viable Government institution to undertake such enterprise.

They should implement the whole program by using Mollahs and Mawlavis, who are already vetted and cleared by Government. Because of the passage of so many un-checked years, where existing religious leaders at Mosques and teachers at Madrasas might have entrenched themselves and found niche in communities, it is incumbent upon the Government to continue with its reform program in this sector in order to draw a safe net around the vulnerable population of Afghanistan in rural areas from the scourge of these mercenaries, who use religion as soft power to turn the entire community to a deadly fighting force. Also, in order to pacify fears of hostility at communities, the Government should assign generous budgets for Mosques and Madrasas to update their curriculum, textbooks and include technological tools such as computers and other modern teaching and learning methods, including the use of social networks like Facebook. Examples of Khateeb or religious preachers in Saudi Arabia and UAE using social network applications such as Facebook etc to connect with their followers and communities to discuss and agree on topics for next Friday's sermon are found in abundance.

This is a job, which the Government of Afghanistan should give the most and number one priority to. War against terrorists is not only in hot battle fields. Breeding places for enemy should be eliminated at grass root level in communities as well.

Mohammed Gul Sahibbzada is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammed.g.sahibbzada@gmail.com



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida
Vice Chairman/ Senior Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie
Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019
www.outlookafghanistan.net



The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.