

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



May 02, 2015

Taliban's New Approach for Expanding the War

Since the beginning of the Taliban spring offensive this year, security in the Northern provinces have been increasingly exacerbating. A number of lawmakers in the Mishrano Jirga expressed concerns over the worsening security situation in the north of the country. Some of the MPs warned that if the government does not act decisively over the increasing activities of the insurgent groups, a number of Northern provinces would be on the verge of collapse. The warnings are coming as the Taliban and other insurgent groups have started their spring offensive to further destabilize the country. In recent weeks, many provinces have been scenes of deadly militant attacks and heavy fighting between the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the insurgent groups. What is worrying is the new approach of the Taliban and the insurgent groups in expanding their campaign of violence across the country targeting areas that enjoyed relative security in the past. In the past, Taliban used different war tactics to take grounds and inflict heavy casualties on Afghan army and police forces as well as attacking on high-profile government targets. The Taliban have constantly shifted their war tactics over years. One of the tactics the Taliban sought in the past was to strike on the most insecure districts in order to take grounds from Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The heavy offensives by the Taliban in a number of districts in Helmand, Nangarhar, Kunduz, Ghazni and Badakhshan provinces have all been focused on taking ground from the ANSF. Another war tactic constantly used by the Taliban was to launch spectacular attacks on high-profile government buildings, foreign embassies and NATO installations. Those were mostly aimed at spread the feeling of insecurity not only across the country but in major cities as well. This tactic was usually covered broadly by the media, which in turn, helped the Taliban to spread their propaganda of widespread bloodshed and insecurity. This year the Taliban and many other insurgent groups have taken different and far more dangerous approaches for making every inch and corner of the country insecure. They have focused on expanding the war from the restive South and East to more secure provinces in the North. The militants have targeted those provinces in the North that have had security gaps. The recent killing of army soldiers in Badakhshan province showed how the Taliban are using security gaps that exist in more vulnerable provinces.

According to reports, hundreds of militants have sheltered on the Afghan side of the border with Turkmenistan, planning to open a new front in the long-lasting war. The Taliban have already intensified their activities in Balkh, Badakhshan and Kunduz provinces. Many MPs and security analysts have warned that if the government fails to beef up the Afghan army in the North, a number of the Northern provinces will further plunge into insecurity and violence.

In addition to expanding the war to the North, the Taliban and the so-called Daesh group have repeatedly carried out abductions of civilians and government officials. The kidnappings on highways is becoming a trend as the militants kidnap people not only on the insecure Kabul-Kandahar highway but also on other areas such as in northern and eastern provinces. This is well serving the militants' evil intentions for spreading violence to each and every corner of the country, making the citizens feel insecure more than ever. The rise of the Islamic State group is another challenge that compounds the security problem both on the war fields and the highways across the country. The situation requires urgent and dedicated anti-insurgency plan from the National Unity Government. As the ANSF has taken full responsibility of securing the country, the new wave of violence and the new insurgency tactics being used by the Taliban is going to be a major test for capability of the ANSF. With the ANSF fully in charge and the new threat of Islamic State group emerging as a new militant player in the country, this year's fighting season is crucially important for sustainability of the ANSF in the post-NATO phase. The government needs to effectively counter the spring offensive through extensive anti-insurgency and defense plan. The Afghan security agencies need to counter insurgency plans to specifically target the insurgents' new war tactics.

The upbeat side of the story is that despite taking complete security responsibility, the ANSF have been able to effectively provide security and push the Taliban back during last year presidential elections. The timely signing of the Bilateral Security Agreement with the US by the National Unity Government (NUG) was the most promising step taken forward for continued robust support of the United States to the ANSF. The government must act quickly to determine the fate of the leadership of the defense ministry by appointing a defense minister as soon as possible. On other hand, with the NUG cabinet almost finalized, it is time for the unity government leaders to step up efforts for securing further support from the US and NATO including advanced weaponry.

On the ground, the ANSF need political support and a cohesive approach from the NUG leadership to launch large-scale offensive against the Taliban across the country. The leaders of the new government need to provide that support if it is supposed to lead a successful anti-insurgency war this year and in the coming years.

Education Significant to Collective Ascend Yet to inspire Our Leaders

By Asmatyari

Education is an entity that installs rich human values in a person, making him more human friendly and socially amiable. It is not an acquisition of an aptitude to read and write is literacy not education. The last three decades Afghanistan's education system was steered with ample radicalization. Control of the education system has been a mobilizing force for the conservative and radicalized movement that led to overthrow of the Soviet government and the subsequent rise to power of the Taliban. During the reign of the Taliban the educational system was inclined to produce Mujahedeen. Till date Taliban diverged several Koranic verses for justifying killings of thousands of innocents, prohibiting women from acquiring education, labeling co-education illicit and the modern scientific inventions desecrated, the list goes on and on. There is hardly any sort of condemnation noticed.

Afghanistan's spending on education is not enough seeing the magnitude of illiteracy. The remedy is to increase the proportion of public resources going into education. If tax-to-GDP ratio cannot be increased, the state should be willing to divert resources from sectors with lower priority towards education. The donor community has been prepared to help with funds when it is not feared that domestic resources were constrained to allow for an increase in public sector expenditure on education.

A glance at our deserted national priorities disheartens us of interminable irrational and abrupt priorities which happens to be mostly influential than inspirational. The undertakings executed under the influence of forged circumstances than national priorities yield not, the desired result based on national interest.

It is right for the world and us to worry about the impact of Afghanistan's dysfunctional educational system, especially when it has been demonstrated that poorly educated young men in a country as large as Afghanistan pose a serious security threat to the rest of the world. Millions of families, especially those with little money, send their children to religious schools or Madrasas. Many of these schools are the only opportunity available for an education, but some have been used as nurturing ground for violent extremism. There is no doubt that Madrasas need to be reformed, but what is even more critical is the reform of public sector educational systems.

The misleading objective opinion owned, by incumbent rulers deluded them of genuine issues, instead, and is stuck to unfounded motives in seeking the traces of others involved despite owing hundreds of operational departments under their service. Sticking to state of constant denial, owing the responsibility of mishaps undertaken in one's realm marks an in-depth degree of incompetence whilst negating any expectancy of betterment. Consequently the politician shun in delusion tries not to revisit the gray areas of governance, consequently improvement turned an intangible target given a rational dictum for intellectual and material achievements has never been a pursuable discourse for our politician. Regrettably the efforts are mostly exercised to earn the credit for else good deeds instead of owning and following a clear stance.

There are several ways of assessing the status of an educational system in the developing world. Among the more frequently used indicators are adult literacy rates for both men and women in various parts of the country; enrollment rates for both girls and boys at different levels of education and in different areas of the country; the dropout rates at different levels of education; the number of years boys and girls spend in schools; the amount of resources committed to education as a proportion of the gross domestic product, particularly by the public sector; the amount of money spent on items other than paying for teachers' salaries; and, finally, some measure of the quality of education provided. However Afghanistan's record is very poor on all these counts which need immediate remedy.

Poor quality of the instruction should preliminarily be considered. The obvious solution is to invest in teacher training, reforming the curriculum and improving the quality of textbooks that should be deficient of religio-ethnic biases. The high quality and standard of books must be kept on the top priorities. There may be poorly constructed or the buildings may be poorly maintained. The students may not even have chairs and desks where they can sit and work. This problem can be handled, by committing more resources for public sector education.

Afghanistan's education system requires an almost total overhaul. In the modern world, economic growth and the spread of democracy have raised the value of education and increased the importance of ensuring that all children and adults have access to high quality and effective education. Education promoting the rich human values is increasingly driven by a growing understanding of what works in education and how to go about successfully improving teaching and learning in schools with sufficient resource allocation. Pluralistic education plays an essential role in relation to conflict prevention, resolution, reconciliation and reconstruction. Under these rationales, education should be structured as a non-traditional tool for building security by linking education to the human security framework.

It is high time we have to admit immense worth of education being a versatile tool guaranteeing stability, social cohesion and societal uplift whilst ensuring respect for human rights. Many societal problems get regulated after education stand top most priority. The skinny budget allocated for education ridicules us as a nation and marks deep-rooted state of intellectual bankruptcy. Unless education renders preliminary requisite, success may remain a daydream.

The role of education for the joint uplift of a nation is irrefutably central. The collective socioeconomic and political advances of a nation are determined by the degree of concentration diverted to improve its literacy graph and the amount of resources allocated to this preliminary societal need. A nation reaches to prominence, turn unbeatable and matchless, only when greater intrepid steps are taken to eliminate illiteracy by declaring the state of educational emergency. The profound significance of education in societal ascend is established and undisputed, contrary of being failed to inspire our politicians.

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Business and Trust Development!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

There is an interesting theory of economics. It is about contraction and expansion of economies. In an economy where everyone is trying to loot and save, general spending decreases which brings down the demand for commodities. Then supply surpasses the demand and production of commodities no more remains profitable and this results in decrease in the activities of the economy in a country. With this comes decline in production and earning by the workers and investors. When income of the people decrease, it further worsens the demand and thus there will be the process of contraction or shrinkage in the economy. Contrary to this, when some amount of money is injected into the economy, it increases the demand. This rise in demand of commodities increases the revenue and profit of the producers and thus they give expansion to the means of their production. At the same time, it increases the amount of money available at hand to be spent by the workers and the factory owners and thus they make more purchases and thus this cycle further galvanizes the overall process of supply and demand in the economy. But it should not be forgotten that it is a classical theory and if the conditions associated with this theory were not met, there can disparity between the ideal and actual conditions of the economy of a country.

Anyhow, the above formula was successfully experimented during The Great Depression of 1935 by the American government. In this economic recession, demand had almost died out, supply was decreased and overall performance of the economy had greatly decreased. Then American government intervened by making purchases from the private sector. Luckily, Second World War was on its peak and there was great demand of arms and ammunition. Government not only increased general purchases but also established a number of factories where thousands of unemployed were enrolled. This at once increased the demand, production and supply of commodities increased and the wheel of economy started running briskly, brining overall prosperity for all the stakeholders of the economy.

Same secret lies behind the Islamic Zakaat system. Once a year, when a large amount of money comes out of the safes of rich and reaches to the hands of poor, demand increases resulting in the expansion in the economy. We can discuss in detail this unique system in another column but today, it would be our topic to beam our attention on a special area of the economy.

Keeping in view the above view, I would like to shed light on the approach of business by the traders and shopkeepers of our country. Their approach comes as a live example of the famous story of which we are all well aware that once a man had a hen that laid a golden egg every day. Although a golden egg was more than the needs of the person but his increasing greed blocked his eyes and also the streams of logic and understanding and one day he decided to slaughter the hen and take all the eggs out of the belly of the hen to become rich in the earliest. But when he slaughtered the hen, it was a heart-shocking discovery that there was not present a single golden egg in the belly

of the hen and he had himself chopped down the stem that he used to stay on.

Here, when one establishes a factory or starts a business (if it is on a large scale or if it is a small cigarette seller), first and foremost aim of a person becomes to make more and more profit. In this regard, first of all we kill our conscience and keep aside the rules and guidelines. As far as government and its accountability are concerned, their eyes can be blinded by a small share of this illegal and unfair profit. If a business is running, it is making huge amounts of profit, ripping and whipping the public from the top and the bottom. This setup of profitability also works due to the fact that with the exception of a small number of people, everyone is following the same track and thus people are left with no other option. It is same to them if they get looted from the first person or the second. But as the theory mentioned in the beginning of this column states, such a setup cannot exist for long and it will be eaten away by a stronger and greedier crocodile of the lake. It is the reason why we see that we don't have any established brand, product or even small shops that could have completed 50 years or more.

In 1847, when Werner von Siemens founded a small company of telegraph in a workshop in Germany, he aimed at providing quality service to the customers and there was no intention of making large amounts of profit. With the passage of time, the company acquired a name and fame for providing quality and also won the trust of customers. With this, company started flourishing and then there was no looking back. Starting from a small workshop of telegraphs, company entered into a number of diversified fields like energy and power, microchips and computers, trains and transportation, home appliances, health care, cities and infrastructure and many more. As per 2011 statements released by the company, Siemens is operating in almost 190 countries of the world with more than 360,000 employees and posted revenues of approximately 73.5 billion Euros for the year of 2011.

Such a trust is a true asset; be it of a business entity or of a member of a society. This trust is not easy to be won but once acquired; it makes the works easy for its owner. This also brings into light another fact that if you try to win the trust of the people and provide them with quality service or product, their trust also brings profit and growth to you. At times, I wonder when our traders and industrialists will understand this and work to serve the people. This phenomenon of serving others is so interesting that, in this way, you serve yourself as well. When you will serve the people, they will trust you and with this trust, your expansion and growth will start and continue. The day our traders and industrialists understood this reality, the fate of the nation would also change.

In the end, I would like to extend my apologies to those who are working honestly and sincerely in our country. My above comments may be of the general majority but definitely our society is also not void of those sincere and hardworking shopkeepers, industrialists and investors who are in the field with the aim of service to their fellow beings.

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