

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



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Afghanistan Water Resources: The cause of Conflicts with Neighboring Countries

Water is a liquid nearly all beings need it. Indeed, it gives life to us but it can change to a means of death as well. As the number of world population increases, the amount of water is decreasing. Many people think the idea of global water wars is impossible, but it has its supporters too. Even in the course of history, water has been in many cases an indirect source of conflict in many countries.

However, the data shows a billion people or one in seven people on the planet, lack access to safe drinking water. Many countries in Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia experience water shortage over the coming years because they have not managed their waters carefully and have overused it badly.

The losses of water reserves have been catastrophic in some regions. For example, Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers lost 144 cubic kilometers of stored freshwater just in seven years. The same amount of water has been lost in the Dead Sea according to the data compiled by the Grace Mission.

The main cause of water loss is reductions in groundwater, lost to evaporation from lakes and reservoirs, also plays a major role in the water loss and a small portion of the water loss is due to soil drying up and to a poor snowpack in many parts of the world.

The losses of groundwater have been very high during the last decade. For instance, about 600 million people live on the 2,000km swath that extends from eastern Pakistan. And about 75% of farmers rely on pumped groundwater to water their crops, and water use is intensifying in these areas.

In a report released by the US director of national intelligence in 2010, it stated that water loss and shortage could lead to potential conflicts – including terror as in India and other countries – that could potentially compromise US national security.

The report focused on water basins critical to the US security regime – the Nile, Tigris-Euphrates, Mekong, Jordan, Indus, Brahmaputra and Amu Darya. It concluded: "During the next 10 years, many countries important to the United States would experience water problems – shortages, poor water quality, or floods – that will risk instability and state failure, increase regional tensions, and distract them from working with the United States."

According to this report water alone would not bring down governments. But water shortages could threaten food production and energy supply and put additional stress on governments struggling with poverty and social tensions that may ultimately bring some of them down in these countries.

According to Peter Glerick, the risk of conflicts over water is growing, because of increased competition, bad governance and the impacts of climate change. Based on this, countries like Afghanistan that has substantial water resources, are critically vulnerable to water conflicts with its neighbors. Afghanistan water resources comprise five major river basins and 36 sub river basins of which three river basins (Kabul Indus, Helmand and Harirod-Murghab) flow to the neighboring countries of Pakistan (Indus River Basin), Iran and Turkmenistan and one river basin (Panj-Amu) marks the border with three Central Asian Republics (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) in the north. As a matter of fact, a large proportion of Afghanistan's waters either flow to or are shared with the neighboring countries.

Tensions over water are already apparent on the ground between Afghanistan and its neighbors, especially Iran and Pakistan. For example, On May 20, 2018, Defense, interior ministers, the spymaster and a top US, NATO commander in Afghanistan have accused Iran of fueling the conflict in western Farah province just for water.

As mentioned, water plays a critical role in our lives. It has been the source of conflicts in the past and it certainly would be the cause of many conflicts in the future, especially as the number of the global population increases and water sources diminish due to climate change and bad water management by the governments. Afghanistan as a country with rich water resources that shares its water basins with neighboring countries, requires to have a very active water management policy and seeking to address its water issues based on bilateral, regional and international mechanisms. At the sometime, it needs having a strong army to defend and protect its water resources and ensures the rights of the Afghan citizens, if needed.

Instability in Farah and other border provinces

Afghan-centered police-to-police cooperation and robust institutional mechanisms are needed to reduce Taliban attacks

By Mohammed Gul Sahibzada

Recent fierce fighting between Taliban and Afghan government at many places in the country, more so in Farah, Baghlan, Faryab and Ghazni, and almost simultaneous two attacks in Kabul city indicate to situations where our internal security system, largely managed by police and military, needs rethinking on strategy and approach. Situation in Farah bordering Iran has been taking serious turns for the last at least five months when coordinated attacks on police check-posts started, which led to changes in senior administration and security leaders, including the Provincial Governor and Chief of Police. Temporarily, situations improved and then again deteriorated leading to almost collapse last week. It raises concerns whether changes in leadership are sufficient or operational and tactical level security methodologies are to be restructured, re-engineered and reformed.

Afghanistan's neighbors pursue their interests in the country and have shaped their policies around these interests. Therefore, changes in attitude and strategy formulation of Afghan government in the ongoing war against international terrorism can invite either wrath or kindness of the neighboring countries. In such a precarious situation, Afghan government should take heed of these sensitivities and enter into dialogue with governments of neighboring countries – especially Pakistan and Iran to dissuade hostile behavior on the part of these countries. In essence, terrorism is a scourge and no one country should support it whatever the cost of doing so might be, and this is a universal reality. Dialogue between Afghan government and its neighboring countries can pave the way for reaching a broader perspective to formulate mutual strategies that can safeguard interests of all the countries, and bring about cordial environment to develop working relationship in areas of policing, sharing intelligence, movement of people across the border and fight against drug trafficking.

One of the major areas for cooperation and improvement include security sector and more so policing methodologies and provincial governance, including coordination and cooperation on information gathering and intelligence, which need to be made effective and workable with unity of efforts, so that a semblance of order is restored in the districts and provinces first, enabling economic development and launching of efforts for sustainable peace and security. It seems ongoing reforms, which are laudable, have been at the national level without much impact on ground realities. Therefore, there is a need for evaluation of the impacts of these reforms at grassroots level and the will to continuously visit reform methodology for remedial purpose during the entire cycle of reform implementation process.

The country where, many parts do not have security systems and policing in place after sunset, many parts of the it are not accessible, and many government services, including mobile telephone services are not fully controlled by the government. Strategy has to be evolved by Afghans with inclusive process and it is to be Afghan centered. No strategy designed and developed by others, not aware of Afghan realities may succeed and such strategies remain only paper based and desktop beautiful documents. Strategy should reflect reality and should be robust and easy to implement across the country through existing resources of Afghan government. In order for this to happen, Afghan government should develop a viable and down to earth implementation plan for its reform strategies. Our armed forces and police are getting professionalized but need more improvement and also need to match realities on the ground. They have a long way to

go. They need to orient themselves to reality of situations with whole of government approach and widen their reach to areas round the clock. Strategically, area domination techniques should be revived by keeping the roads open all the time.

It has become a trend that Afghan officials blame Iran for the situation in Farah and the Defense Minister, Lieutenant General Tariq Shah Bahrami has said that the war in Farah is "a war over water" and that some countries in the region are trying to destabilize Afghanistan. He is probably pointing to Pakistan, Iran and possibly Russia as few experts opine that 'an unholy coalition of our neighbors – Russia, Pakistan and Iran – has been formed in the region'. Minister of Interior, Mr. Barmak has promised to send more troops to Farah and vowed to remove all the hurdles. Iran, Pakistan and Russia deny all such aspersions and raise concerns on internal problems in Afghanistan and rise of Islamic State.

The people of Afghanistan believe that the root cause for eastern border problems is Durand line, which was demarcated in 1893 and till now it remains unaddressed. After the incident in Farah province last week, Afghan government officials believe that the problem is on water. No doubt, water is essential and Afghanistan needs it as well as Iran. We should start exploring of addressing these problems diplomatically and politically through bilateral, regional and international mechanisms. Both countries, Afghanistan and Iran had the last agreement to share the water in 1973 and both have accused each other of breaching it, but have not developed a functional water sharing mechanism.

Afghan security strategy should focus on: hardening of security eco-system of the cities, towns, villages and qaryas; separating out individual criminal acts and responding to them and developing diplomatic, political, regional and international mechanisms. Till now, the security system has focused more on hardening of possible targets of insurgency and so, one finds heavily fortified security, government and other installations with series of T walls and sand bags everywhere. Not much attention is paid to make the eco system safe. It is the reason that insurgents appear repeatedly and launch attacks. Concerted efforts are not there to develop mechanisms, which could respond quickly to emerging challenges and learn from ongoing incidents.

Farah police should be able to coordinate and cooperate with their counter parts across border, Iran and make efforts to separate criminal acts, which are: acquiring and possessing weapons and explosive, transportation of weapons, attacking government institutions and people, killing and injuring security forces and people and also smuggling of drugs, weapons and support equipment. There is need of developing working level law enforcement cooperation mechanism and appropriate regional and international mechanisms. Police to police cooperation and other working level cooperation, such as on customs, drugs, immigration would be able to at least, reduce conflict related criminality. The mechanism will pave the way to discuss information on trans-border crimes and criminals and possibility of utilizing law enforcement tools. Security in bordering provinces including Farah may remain fragile unless holistic, area specific mechanisms are developed and put in place. These should reflect local realities and focus on unity of efforts through field coordination, governance, decentralized decision making and appropriate accountability mechanisms.

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The Road to a TB-Free World

By Michel Sidibé and Lucica Ditiu

When Mabruka was 18, she came home from school one day and started coughing up blood. She had been feeling sick for about two months, and when she went to a health clinic, she described symptoms such as weight loss, fatigue, shortness of breath, fever, night sweats, chills, loss of appetite, and pain when breathing and coughing. Mabruka was diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB) and prescribed a daily regimen of 9-10 pills. The treatment lasted six months, and during that time she could not attend school. Shockingly, Mabruka's experience was almost the same as that of someone contracting TB in the 1950s, when the first treatments were discovered. Owing to a lack of therapeutic innovation since then, poor living conditions, and widespread poverty, millions of people around the world are still being deprived of their right to live free of TB. More than ten million people contract the disease each year. Despite being preventable and curable, it is the leading cause of death among people living with HIV, and the most common cause of death by an infectious agent in modern times.

The standard treatment for TB is unacceptably antiquated. The process is so long, and the side effects so unpleasant, that, in the absence of community-based treatment programs, many people with TB stop taking their medicines midway through the regimen. One consequence has been a rise in antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which is now a top global health threat.

In 2016, multidrug-resistant TB killed 240,000 people. More than half of those with MDR-TB do not have access to effective treatment. And for those who do, treatment often lasts for at least two years, assuming a drug can be found to fight the resistant bacteria.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda aims to eliminate TB by 2030. Yet the global leadership and investment needed to achieve that goal has been sorely lacking. At the current rate of progress, it will take us until 2180 to end one of the world's oldest public-health threats. The international community needs to take five specific actions to eliminate the scourge of TB once and for all. For starters, the gaps in existing health systems must be closed, so that all people have access to services for preventing, diagnosing, and treating TB. Political and civil-society leaders need to do more to champion health as a human right. And they should focus especially on AMR, which poses a threat to current and future generations alike.

Second, policymakers and health-care providers must transform the standard response to TB to make it more equitable, rights-based, non-

discriminatory, and people-centered, not just in health settings but also in workplaces, schools, and jails. This is especially important for vulnerable populations, including children and people living with HIV. But, more broadly, the ultimate goal should be universal health coverage, in order to protect people from the potentially catastrophic health expenditures associated with TB and MDR-TB.

Third, we must commit to making the investments necessary to end TB, recognizing that the right thing to do also makes financial sense. The UN estimates that, over the long term, "Every dollar spent on TB generates up to \$30 through improved health and increased productivity." The fourth priority is to leverage the private sector. To fuel innovation and new discoveries, we urgently need more partnerships between governments, businesses (particularly drug makers), and civil-society organizations. The goal should be to develop better, less toxic treatment regimens that work faster than what is currently available. Finally, the international community must commit to more decisive and accountable global leadership. Without accountability, goals and commitments have little meaning. Governments need to be pressured to improve living standards. That means ensuring access to nutritious food, a clean environment, and education, and fostering healthy economic conditions. Meeting those objectives will go a long way toward reducing the burden of TB.

Major global health organizations such as The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Unitaid, the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and others are supporting countries in this agenda. But with a global funding gap of \$2.3 billion per year, the effort to end TB cannot be left to just a few organizations.

Over the past 15 years, countries that have made significant progress in the fight against TB are the exception. To make progress the global norm, we will need to create a critical mass of countries that have both addressed the structural determinants of TB and appropriated adequate funding for treatments. Specifically, that means identifying the 40% of TB cases – 60% of which are among people living with HIV – that are missed each year.

On September 26, the UN General Assembly will hold its first-ever High-Level meeting on TB, and member states will issue a political declaration of intent to tackle this issue. We would urge them to reflect on the five action items above. The path to a TB-free world starts there.

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