

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



October 11, 2016

The Fall of Kunduz and Government's Response

Last time when Kunduz was taken back from Taliban, the government officials made commitments to the people of Kunduz that their security would be guaranteed and Taliban would never be allowed to take control of Kunduz city again. However, their commitments proved to be empty promises and few days earlier Taliban were able to take control of the city again and it is still under their control. And, this time when the city was taken by Taliban, it was again promised that soon they will be repelled and security would be restored; however, that remains only a hollow claim.

A member of Kunduz's provincial council, Assadullah Sadat, recently said in an interview, "I want to convey my message to the president whom we consider as our grandfather - the president promised the people of Kunduz that the province will not collapse again (after October last year). He said the person who I appointed as governor will improve your security."

In fact, the basic problem is the absence of a comprehensive strategy regarding security. It can be observed that Afghan security forces mostly react to the assaults and operations carried out by Taliban. Though they should be proactive enough to make preparations before such assaults and operations are carried out.

These assaults by Taliban are not something on a small scale that cannot be observed before they happen. They require preparedness and logistic movements, which take place long before the assaults are carried out and Afghan security forces and intelligence agency should be in a position to detect all these preparations and movements and act proactively. However, that can happen when there is a proper strategy in place, not a mechanism that runs on ad-hoc basis. Moreover, it is also important in such cases that the authorities should understand their responsibilities and they should know what they have to do. They, in many cases, seem so unprepared as if they have forgotten their duties. In some cases, as can be observed nowadays, they keep on blaming each other or avoid responsibilities in awkward ways. Like the governor of Kunduz, Assadullah Omarkhail, who said in a recent statement that the death toll during the war in Kunduz was part of a divine order.

He also blamed past action by security officials as the reason of the fall of Kunduz city, particularly that of deputy chief of staff for the army, General Murad Ali Murad.

Meanwhile, Murad, has said that he will soon disclose the names of those who allegedly played a role in the current crisis. He said in a statement, "Some elements which have played a role in the siege of Kunduz, I will share (their names) with the people of Kunduz; if anyone stops standing by the Kunduz people, they are making big mistakes."

However, on Monday, President Ashraf Ghani dismissed Omarkhail's remarks and said no official should justify their failures and inactions in this way. "No government official has the right to justify their inactions and failures by misinterpreting a religious perception and fate," said Ghani.

The sort of statement given by Omarkhail clearly shows that the government officials are really desperate and they do not know how to tackle the issue properly. They do not have any strategic plan that they should take guidance from and, therefore, they seem to have nothing to say.

Chief of National Directorate of Security (NDS), Masoom Stanekzai, however, showed more responsibility by apologizing to the people of Kunduz over security forces' failure to thwart Taliban attack. "We apologize to the people of Kunduz, I think we all must offer an apology, because we failed to do our work in a way that could help prevent the event," said Stanekzai, referring to the attack.

This apology means a lot to the people of Kunduz in particular and to the people of Afghanistan in general; however, that has to be followed by corrective measures now and there should be proactive measures in place in future to detect such attacks before they happen. Some of the MPs, however, did not seem contented with the response given by the security officials and they called on the leaders of the National Unity Government (NUG) to resign from their posts due to the ongoing situation in Kunduz city and the political rift between President Ashraf Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah.

Former minister of finance, Anwarul Haq Ahadi said, "They (government leaders) have no achievements to offer and fail to tackle the issues, but they do not have the courage to confess to their failure; if they accept it, they must step down, therefore they want to ignore the issues."

Many have highlighted that the present situation wherein the government is not able to do anything worthwhile is because of the rift between the President and CEO. This rift is also the reason of why they have not been able to come together and form a uniform and proper strategy to tackle with the issue of insecurity.

The Nation-State Contract

By Hujjatullah Zia

No law shall contravene the tenets and provisions of the holy religion of Islam in Afghanistan," the Constitution states in article 3. Historical facts, social values and religious tenets play significant role in legislation process. Legislators will have to be aware of all facts in a society and the challenges that might hamper the implementation of law. Law is established to protect the fundamental rights and liberty of citizens, ensure social justice and maintain discipline.

In the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, religious values hold strong sway in legislation and no law is supposed to be against the Islamic tenets. A secular law will not meet the needs of a religious society and vice versa.

Lawmakers are to consider not only religious values but also cultural standards, social mores and ethical code so as to establish law according to the needs of the public. In other words, public custom is one of the sources in legislation and parliamentarians, who represent the nation, should approve the laws which are no contrary to a society's custom.

Equality and lack of discrimination on the grounds of one's race, color and creed are legal principles in legislation and law must uphold citizens' rights equally. When laws are immaculately approved by legislative power, citizens have to abide by them. Article 94 of Afghanistan's Constitution says, "Law shall be what both houses of the National Assembly approve and the President endorses...." Following the endorsement of the president, in Afghanistan, the nation must obey the law for two reasons:

The theory of "social contract" suggests that law is a binding contract between state and nation. Secondly, the school of natural rights suggests that the main reason behind the binding law is gaining justice - which is a significant want of mankind. Therefore, all, including the public and executive power, must abide by law.

Based on this theory, the most vital function of law is to ensure justice and an unjust law will not be binding.

Savigny, a German lawyer and the founder of historical school, believes that law is the product of the public conscience and social upheaval. According to him, nation - a group of people with common beliefs and collective conscience residing a particular land for generations - is the lawmaker in a society. Therefore, law is not based on the state's will.

It is believed that whenever law and the public beliefs are in conflict, society will move towards anomy and the rights and liberty of citizens will be vulnerable to chaos and disorder. Unsurprisingly, sometimes some legal principles will work well in a particular geography with certain history and social values while the same principles will bear bitter fruit

in another society. However, there are some legal universal principles to be considered in legislation all around the human societies such as justice, commitment to contract, etc. It is believed that law is the reflection of a society's historical facts, social values, cultural standards and moral norms. A society's law roots in moral standards of the public - though moral values differ from one society to the next. When law violates moral standards, it will not be respected by citizens and will erode shortly.

It should be noted that legal rules are binding and the executive power is supposed to implement the law whereas there is no force behind moral values other than one's conscience. In Afghanistan, where more than 99 per cent is Muslim, the law is established based on religious tenets, moral values and international standards - Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and international instruments are recognized officially. Constitutionally, the government is committed to form a democratic society, void of violence and bloodshed, where people's rights and freedoms are protected, any kinds of discriminations are condemned, physical and mental torture of prisoners and forced confessions are banned, women are considered equal to men, etc. In short, the current law is in accordance with the society's facts and meets the social, political and economic needs of the public if enforced properly.

The persisting challenges are not the result of legislation but poor implementation of law. There are serious challenges in the machinery of the government which hamper law-enforcement and the officials do not fulfill their commitments. As it was mentioned above, the state and nation made a binding contract - based on theory of "social contract" - in which the nation vowed to abide by law and be prosecuted in case of breaking it and the government vowed to protect their rights to life, liberty and property.

But what if the government violates this contract and does not protect the citizens' rights?

Since the law is established on democratic basis and respects the society's values, citizens are not allowed to violate the law. But they can resort to civil disobedience and peaceful demonstrations against the poor implementation or flagrant violation of law by officials.

Civil society activists and media will have to put pressure on the government to respect and enforce the law. With the implementation of law, the bulk of the challenges will be resolved in the country. So, approving law without putting it into practice will not alleviate the challenges. The dishonor of poor governance and lack of law-enforcement will be more than the honor of having democratic law.

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Characteristics of Great Teachers

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Teaching is one of the most complicated, challenging, stressful, time-consuming careers a person can choose to pursue. It demands broad knowledge of subject matter, enthusiasm, a caring attitude, and a love of learning, skills of discipline and classroom management techniques and a desire to make a difference in the lives of young people. Kindness, compassion, and overwhelming dedication to the children keep them coming back despite challenges. Usually, his time is filled with long hours, preparations; weekends spent grading papers, few breaks, low salaries, fewer facilities. It is a calling, a passion, a life's work to be a teacher. In the other words, Teaching is a tough, important, purposeful and honorable journey to nurture and lead young generation. With all these qualities required, it's no wonder that it's hard to find great teachers.

Great teachers have clear, written-out objectives. They have lesson plans that give students a clear idea of what they will be learning, what the assignments are and what the grading policy is. Assignments have learning goals and give students ample opportunity to practice new skills. The teacher is consistent in grading and returns work in a timely manner. Great teachers are prepared and organized. They are in their classrooms early and ready to teach. They present lessons in a clear and structured way. Their classrooms are organized in such a way as to minimize distractions. Great teachers engage students and get them to look at issues in a variety of ways. Effective teachers use facts as a starting point, not an end point; they ask "why" questions, look at all sides and encourage students to predict what will happen next. They ask questions frequently to make sure students are following along. They try to engage the whole class, and they don't allow a few students to dominate the class. They keep students motivated with varied, lively approaches.

Great teachers form strong relationships with their students and show that they care about them as people. Great teachers are warm, accessible, enthusiastic and caring. Teachers with these qualities are known to stay after school and make themselves available to students and parents who need them and they demonstrate a commitment to the school. Great teachers are masters of their subject matter. They exhibit expertise in the subjects they are teaching and spend time continuing to gain new knowledge in their field. They present material in an enthusiastic manner and instill a hunger in their students to learn more on their own. Great teachers communicate frequently with parents. They reach parents through conferences and frequent written reports home. They do not hesitate to pick up the telephone to call a parent if they are concerned about a student. Unlike traditional teacher, great teachers involve students into the teaching process by questioning and by interacting with them is a verity of methods. Once the students are involved mentally, physically and socially then it helps in better retention. It is aptly said, "People remember 20% of what they hear,

30% of what they see, 50% of what they hear and see and 80% of what they hear, see and do". While teaching, the teacher's oral language should be supported by the usage of blackboard or power point presentations, or cue cards. There has to be effective coordination between these two for effective teaching. It makes the students to concentrate effectively. If students fail to understand the oral language then the black board writing material will come to their rescue for better understanding and retention. The teacher while using the black board should not spend too much time towards black board as it loses the touch with the students. There has to be a fine balance between these two elements.

In most country, teachers must have certain degree in elementary school and pass a rigorous test in core curriculum areas. Middle and high school teachers must demonstrate competency in the subject area they teach by passing a test or by completing an academic major, graduate degree or comparable course work. These requirements already apply to all new hires. Schools are required to tell parents about the qualifications of all teachers, and they must notify parents if their child is taught for more than four weeks by a teacher who is not highly qualified. The role of teacher in modern educational system is not only passing on merely knowledge to students but also, as a real architect of new generation, responsible to build personality of future citizens. They do not just impart knowledge but also acts as a friend, philosopher, guide, parent and facilitator. He is a continuous learner and an excellent listener. The more he listens the more he learns and the more he learns then the more he teaches. That is why it is said that the teachers are life-long learners and their learning is the real meaning of learning from cradle to grave. In fact, Teaching is comprised of theoretical and artistic components:

The theoretical parts should be studied, researched and understood but the artistic part must be cultivated by teaching experience. Anybody and everybody can cultivate this skill but human upbringing needs enthusiasm, hard work and also national investments.

Teachers are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts effect the fate of a nation. Beside building the talent of students, they have to motivate and inspire the students by being a role model to build their personality.

Teachers need to know what motivates the students and what are their aspirations and expectations from the teachers. Great teachers are not born in the minds of the students but they are born in the hearts of the students; a teacher who is attempting to teach without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn is hammering on cold iron. Finally great teachers are like a candle that consumes itself to light the way for others.

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