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Preface

Statistics of numerous national and international organizations shows that violence against women and crimes are increased year by year in Afghanistan. From time to time, news on heinous violence against women are reported from different parts of the country. The Afghan government and international community, however, has made a lot of efforts and spent huge amount of money under the banner of improving the life of Afghan women, but these efforts are not made in the way that was needed.

Women's situation in the world and its comparison with Afghanistan, whether Afghan woman is victim of ultra-conservatism and ultra-liberalism, what are the fundamental factors behind violence against women and what are the solutions; you would read about these issues in the first part of the analysis brought to you by Analysis Section of Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS)

You will read an interview about lack of reaction of Taliban to the recent government's peace proposal in the second part of the analysis. For the first time in past one and a half decade, the Afghan government proposed specific offers to Taliban regarding peace; however, the Taliban responded negatively to these offers by their silence. You will find answers for why Taliban did not valued this proposal of the government and other related issues in this interview.

Afghan Woman; the Victim of ultra-conservatism and ultra-liberalism



The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission released its annual report on violence against women last week (11 March, 2018). This report states that 4340 cases of violence against women became recorded in 1396 (2017) which shows a rise of 11.7% in compare to the records of 1395 (2016).

Violence against women in Afghanistan is considered one of the biggest social challenges in the country and hence the Afghan woman has been a victim of present ultra-conservatism and ultra-liberalism in the society. 8th of March has been also celebrating in Afghanistan where Afghan officials continuously talks about women's human rights in the country; however, the situation is practically concerned due to existed ultra-conservatism and ultra-liberalism.

On one hand, if news on murdering of women as a result of demotic violence is published; on the other hand, sometimes, the shocking news of Honor cases are heard as well; and the most interesting things is that some high-rank officials and powerful people, in some cases, are involved in such issues. As an example of the latest incident, Pajhwok Afghan News reported that the second vice-chair of the Afghan Senate had tried to marry a married woman.¹

Violence against women, the basic reasons behind it and the solutions for alleviating violence against women in Afghanistan are analyzed below.

Violence against Women in the World

The problem of violence against women is not limited to a region or a country, but this phenomenon is everywhere, especially it is widely present in the Western world. For example, only in 2013, about 13 million women were physically abused and 3.7 million others faced sexual aggression in the European Union.²

Also, every 9 seconds in the US. A woman is assaulted or beaten. On average, near 20 women per minute are physically abused. 1 In 5 women and 1 in 7 men have been victims of sexual abuse in their life time .³ According to a report by the FBI, 79770 rape cases were recorded in 2013 only.⁴

¹ Please refer to Pajhwok Afghan News for details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/dr/2018/03/06/%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%AA%D9%87-%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%89-%D9%BE%DA%98%D9%88%D8%A7%DA%A9-%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%85-%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%B1%DA%AF%D9%87-%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B4-%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%8A%DA%A9-%D8%B2%D9%86-%D8%B4%D9%88%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%89-%D9%86%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%AF>

² See Online: http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf

³ See the statistics of American national coalition against domestic violence in the link below:

<http://www.ncadv.org/learn/statistics>

⁴ See the details for statistics of rape issue in the official website of FBI:

https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/tables/1tabledatadecoverviewpdf/table_1_crime_in_the_united_states_by_volume_and_rate_per_10000_inhabitants_1994-2013.xls

The above statistics show that violence against women is not limited to a country or a geographical terrorist and that this phenomenon is existed in the entire countries of the world; however, it does not mean to condone the increasing and pitiable cases of violence against women in Afghanistan and not to make efforts for resolving this issue in the country.

Violence against women in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a traditional and religious society and most of its people are illiterate and they are unaware of women rights in Islam. Therefore, women are excluded from their natural and Islamic rights, even it is considered a “shameful action” and “taunt” if women ask for their legacy!

There was violence against women in Afghanistan in the past; but there was not a system for recording these cases and a lot of these cases were kept hidden. Of course, the cases of violence against women are being enlightened and recorded by counter-violence administrations, laws and media.

Despite establishment of a separate ministry for women in 2001 and after the formation of new system, women’s participation also became increased in the government and thus, Afghanistan is even forerunner from a lot of counties in the world in this regard. For example, the share of women in present Afghan Parliament is more than what it is in France, Russia, Japan, India, Pakistan and many other countries. There share is also increased in education, government and NGOs in compare to the past. Besides that, some law in support of women’s human rights became ratified; yet, violence against women in different types of it is in upsurge every year.

According to information by Afghan Attorney General’s Office, more than 1700 cases of violence against women were recorded from the beginning of 1396 till its eight month which included 995 cases of beating, 147 cases of rape, 134 cases of verbal abuse and 115 cases of harassment.

Moreover, the latest report of Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission also indicates increase in violence against women in compare to previous year.

1420 cases of physical violence, 228 sexual violence, 1317 cases of verbal and physiological violence, 749 cases of economic violence and 629 cases of other types of violence against women became recorded in 1396 (2017) only by this report.

Reasons behind Violence against Women

The main factors behind violence against women in the country are as following:

Unawareness of people about Women Rights in Islam: Illiteracy and sciolism in the country has resulted in unawareness or misinterpretation of some people when it comes to Women Rights and Position in the Islamic Law.

Ultra-Conservatism and Ultra-Liberalism: The human rights of women are overridden in our country from one hand; and from other hand; there is a detesting condition of ultra-conservatism that, contralto to entire social values, has excluded the Afghan women and has impacted the support of women's human rights in the society negatively. Furthermore, laws and rules for tackling violence against women are made that are not only contrary to the Islamic prescriptions, but, in meantime, they provoke harsh and adverse reaction of the community as well.

Ultra-conservatism and ultra-liberalism has resulted in sensitivity of people to thes issues and thus, it is counted as the most important reason behind related shocking events that the case of Farkhunda, a young girl killed in 1393 in Kabul city, could be exampled.

Ignorance and Lack of Education and Knowledge: Ignorance, illiteracy or sciolism are other important factors behind violence against women in the society. It is why most of the heinous cases came to ground in remote and rural areas and so the cases of violence against women by illiterate or unlearned persons in the country are on the rise.

Impact of Align Culture: From 2001, due to the uncontrolled freedom of media, the alien culture is being promoted in the country and it still has had very negative impacts on the Afghan society. It is due to this strange culture that the

rate of divorce had increased, women are being abused in public places and the cases of rape are also on the rise, and such incidents even also took place with relatives and children as well.

Corruption and Weakness in Implementation of the Law: Lack of rule of law and existence of corruption in judiciary organs of Afghanistan are also counted as factors behind increase in cases of violence against women in the country.

What should be done?

As the scale of violence against women in the country is on the rise every year, so rising the public awareness on women's rights, raising educational level, especially in the remote areas of the country, considering the role of Ulema in making people to understand about women's rights in Islam and struggle against corruption in judiciary and security organs are most needed in order to prevent such unsavory cases in the country.

The Afghan government is yet to have any efficient performance, especially in remote areas of the country, when it comes preventing the rise of heinous incidents of violence against women, contrary to that, there are beliefs in the community that not only the efforts of government and international community were not effective in improving women's conditions, but these efforts are considered as incentive of uncontrolled freedom in this issue which naturally results in ultra-conservatism.

Why the recent Peace Offer of the Afghan Government Remains Unanswered/ Interview



On, February 28, 2018, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, in the Second Kabul Process Conference, presented a new Peace Policy and presented some offers to the Taliban in order to initiate peace talks with the Afghan government. The government's Peace Policy was widely became supported on national and international level and was covered by media widely.

There were hopes that the Taliban would also give green light to the offers of President Ghani; however, despite passing several weeks, the Taliban yet to express their official view in this regard. But in an indirect look to the circles close to the Taliban, it seems that the Taliban's response to the new offer of the government is NO.

Some concerns are unanswered in this regard; therefore, the media department of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) conducted an interview with the Director-General of CSRS, **Dr. Abdul Baqi Amin**. We kindly invite you to read it here.

First question is that why the Taliban are yet to respond the peace offer of the government that is unprecedented in last 17 years?

The main reason behind this may be that the government neglected the main factor of war, which is the presence of foreign troops in the country, in its offers and it has not got any clarity in this regard. Taliban are against Americans' presence in this country and tells that they will fight until the presence of Americans continues; however, this issue has been unattended in these offers. I think if there is a timetable for withdrawal of Americans, it would fundamentally pave the way for peace; or, it would be also effective if American make clear that they will present timetable when Taliban come to peace talks and hope for ending the war became emerged.

In my opinion, nowadays Taliban, Afghan government and America understand that no party is able to win the war through war; but the problem is that the involved sides follow policies that do not result in peace and still keep the severity of war. Americans also backed the President's offers; however, they, practically, insist on war and focus on fighting. Meanwhile, Americans have not specified the deadline of their presence and withdrawal. For the time, they neither talk about the number of their troops neither the date of their withdrawal. Afghan government, then, has not got role in decisions; it backs and applies the decisions taken by the United States.

Mr. Amin! As Taliban are ready to talk with America, why they do not become ready to talk with the Afghan government?

Considering the years-long positions of the Taliban, they have divided this issue into two parts. One: presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan; Two: changes in the system. Their position, to the extent I followed, on the first point is that they tell that America is a side of the war and as Americans have practical presence in Afghanistan, so we want to talk with Americans regarding their presence and/or withdrawal; because the Afghan government has not got the authority to tell Americans to stay here or leave. The view regarding second point is that if Americans specify the deadline and withdraw the country, they "Taliban" will talk to Afghan side regarding the changes in the system. Thus, Taliban had offered

talks to American and tell that they want to discuss issues like presence and withdrawal of Americans and exchange of prisoners and similar issues directly to Americans. We, then, will talk about internal issues with Afghan government and other Afghan political sides, the Taliban add.

In my point of view, the recent offers of Afghan government regarding making peace with Taliban are subject to be praised; but as they have some deficiencies, perhaps, most people will be skeptical when it comes to their implementation. I shared these remarks with head of Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) that we would not be able to gain a lot from these offers. As you may have heard, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, after the second meeting of Kabul Process said that peace requires national and social consensus; meaning that President's word is not our words; and the Chief Executive of Afghanistan has also got the same view. Let me say that if his governmental team does not agree with the President, how his offers will have [positive] results. For that reason, I would like to say that this proposal was before the time and the ground was not facilitated for its acceptance; it may be the cause that the Taliban are yet to show any reaction. A mechanism is needed here where the Taliban, the Afghan government and the entire political parties of the country could agree upon because trust-building is needed before every other task. The main point is to stop this war, not to define the good and bad sides of the issue.

So, in your opinion, how can the initiation of talks be made possible?

It is called deadlock when Taliban say that we do not talk with the Taliban and we talk with American only, so the Taliban have to talk with the government. However, if the Taliban do not talk with the Afghan government, they are, at least, ready to talk with Afghan influential sides, why the Afghan government does not show positive reaction here. There is a strong need for a kind of series of primary talks where the trusted and close individuals of Taliban, Afghan government and other political sides, tribes and parties are present, who, then, will be working of shortening the distance and establishing a roadmap on which the all sides could agree upon. Besides that, there should be a guarantor side which could prevent any side from breaking the promises, as there are chances of explosion from an anti-peace side, and repudiation of the other side regarding

talks. Last week, after an explosion in Kabul, America and Afghan President said that they will not talk with Taliban after that. The problem is that the government is not ready to bring such a process to ground. I, personally, proposed these issues to the government, hence, I see problems in the term of “Afghan-owned” from the Afghan government when it comes peace talks.

What problems do you see in the term of “Afghan-owned” when it comes to Peace Talks?

The term of “Afghan-owned peace talks” may have positive aspect as well and it is that we should protect the country from foreigners’ interventions and interferences. However, I think that this term and policy has affected the Peace Talks negatively and is a “barrier” for now. For now, this means that the Afghan government has the initiative and entire control in its hands, the entire initiative is in one hand and it is up to it whether to talk or not. It is a barrier in front of peace. Both Afghan and Taliban are Afghan sides here. It is a good thing for Afghans to have the initiative of this process in their control and prevent foreigners’ interventions; so, in this point, Afghan national and elite neutral and influential personalities that are committed to national interests should be given opportunities to play their role in this part, not that everything should be done through government. It is almost impossible for two adversary sides to have effective talks without a mediator.

On the other hand, the positions of the President also change frequently. A few days before the Kabul Process, Afghan President said that he will not make peace with Taliban after that; however, a few days later, in the Kabul Process, he proposed such generous offers. President will lose his trust when he changes positions in big issues of the country. If something happens tomorrow and President says that he does not want to advance peace talks, then, what will happen? Therefore, a neutral side should come to ground to prevent double standards. Nowadays, there is an atmosphere of mistrust regarding positions of President that he might once again boycott the Peace Talks.

Another barrier, in my point of view, is that the fancy of translating the peace talks into Taliban surrender should be removed. There is a fear that the fancy of

that America and Afghan government want the Taliban to put their weapons down and change their armed struggle into political struggle. It is something that the Taliban will never accept and, it is in this point, the government should bring the main issue to the negotiation table.

Before that, Afghan government had focused on Pakistan for peace; now, Pakistan has backed the Afghan government new peace proposal; what do you think, to what extent Pakistan will be able to play a role in it?

The truth is that peace is in benefit of all. If Pakistan thinks straight, it would have to back peace in Afghanistan. Stability in Afghanistan is stability in Pakistan and today, stability is linked closely to development. Pakistan needs peace in Afghanistan as much as it needs it in its own country; however, unfortunately, policies are not in favor of both countries as well as in of the region. Pakistan plays double-standard; at first, it provided ground for Americans and subdued the Taliban; but, in the deep, it thinks that America's presence is not in its interest and so does not want it. Also, it does not want Indian dominance in the region; so it plays the game the way that receives aid from America and meanwhile bring America's presence under question and also prevents India's sway as well.

So, what should Afghanistan do with such policies of regional countries?

There are a handful of activities on regional level that could be helpful in peace-making. First, Afghanistan needs to stay neutral between superpowers, regional and international blocks. For example, it should keep balance between China, America, Russia, India and other countries, not only like as it do it now. It keeps America's side and does not take care of regional balance. This job is not in benefit of Afghanistan. Neighbors' legal and political sensitivities should be taken care as well. Nowadays, Afghanistan needs Pakistan and Pakistan needs Afghanistan; thus, trust-building is needed. Instead of lobbying against each other, they should work on mutual goals and towards eliminating the barriers. For the time, the America's strategy that insists on India's role in Afghanistan, is not in benefit of Afghanistan at all because it arises Pakistan's sensitivity and cause Afghanistan to enter a proxy war. It is obvious that America's priority will be controlling Russian, China and other countries, but it is not Afghanistan's priority.

Afghans needs to stay neutral and they should not become scarified by China, Russia and America's rivalries. Afghanistan should try to become benefited from their facilities by staying neutral. Afghanistan has got an important geopolitical location and it should be profitable for us instead of being disadvantageous.

Thank You

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Note: Please let us know your feedback and suggestions for the improvement of Weekly analysis.

