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Afghanistan: Einstein for President

Abstract: With a new administration in the United States and Afghanistan's elections on the horizon, it is high time a new strategy be devised for the success of the war on terror and for bringing normalcy, if that were possible at all, to the war torn country of Afghanistan. Different people from different quarters with different perspectives suggest different remedies to the now more than thirty-year old crisis in Afghanistan. Let us look at a few of these options:

A Change of Emphasis in the US policy: (To end one war and win the other.)

The Obama administration has from the outset expressed a serious interest in finding ways to end the war in Iraq and to win the war in Afghanistan. Recently the administration is busy conducting a thorough study of a new strategy. Apparently the Obama team is engaged in weighing its options especially considering lack of success so far regarding the democratization of Afghanistan, winning of the minds and hearts of its people and creating a situation whereby terrorists would not be able to operate inside Afghanistan.

Recent reports talk of the desire of the administration to concentrate on military success even at the cost of abandoning, probably temporarily, US insistence on democratization of the country. Perhaps also one of the reasons for this has been lack of progress in the development of a civil society compatible with the needs of the country by the current Afghan administration which is buried to its ears in corruption and inefficiency. Perhaps also because the US may not want to associate with a failing administration there, so it wants to distance itself from a problem that does not have an easy solution. Alternatively it may think that military solution by doubling US troops in Afghanistan might work

There are many observers who would not agree to such a proposition on the grounds that as experience has shown the nature of the Afghan people is such that military conquest has never worked beyond a temporary hold on the land and the US should not invest so much in men and material only to achieve tempo rary objectives. It must incorporate finding of peaceful solutions, embarking on a mass scale public education and means and ways of truly demonstrating that the US is a friend of the Afghans. This may require fool proof methods of avoiding civilian casualties, indecent searches and humiliation of the village and tribal dignitaries and values. It may also require involving of Afghan intelligentsia of proven prudence and patriotism from anywhere in the process of devising of a new strategy for Afghanistan.

Supporting the Civil Society:

There are others who think that supporting the Afghan civil society to find internal solutions to the grave social and economic ailments of the country might change the course of events in Afghanistan. This way of thought dwells on the fact that perhaps it is a much better alternative

to help the people help themselves rather than prescribe or impose solutions for their problems.

This requires above all an effective democratic government composed of enlightened individuals thoroughly dedicated to serving the country on the basis of a priority based nationally agreed upon plan of action. The course it would take must address first and foremost, the problem of the warlords and their negative influence on development in general in the country. It should seek ways to deal with corruption in all its forms and shapes and should be enabled to deal effectively and strongly with the problem, purge the government from corrupt officials notwithstanding their rank, or order, and strength of their militia by empowering the hand of the law by establishing an able judiciary supported by a strong police force.

Thirdly, it must address together with international assistance, the problem of security. This is an area which seems to entail internal and external factors involving regional and international issues, interests and forces. All interested parties should contribute in the elimination of the threat of terrorism and of bringing peace to Afghanistan. However, their efforts should be coordinated with the government of Afghanistan in such a way that mutual trust would be maintained and national sovereignty respected.

Also adopting of an educational and administrative policy to make the people aware of the reactionary extremist tendencies of the Taleban and Al-Qaeda and to empower them to fight these elements within their communities, must be considered as measure of great importance.

More Power to the United Nations:

Presently, the UN is a rather weaker member of a greater alliance that is fighting terror in Afghanistan. ISAF compared to the US and NATO plays a minor role in the actual fight. War on terror is conducted without a strong mechanism of coordination and collateral casualties are beyond a reasonable limit. This has to a great extent alienated the people, who are the victims of the war, from their own government and the so-called liberating international forces that are increasingly seen as the enemy, a situation that benefits Taleban. Therefore, a bigger role given to the UN would give the people the assurance that their country is not under the domination of a single country, but that it is being looked after by the world at large.

Hoping that New Elections Would Bring a More Efficient Government to Power:

This solution seems to be the most challenging in that people's trust has been betrayed by the current government that was also elected with a great surge of good will and expectation. People now see that Afghanistan problems are so complex that it might need a prodigy to solve them! Perhaps it is because of this fact that a former child-genius, Sayed Jalal, in addition to some other candidates, has announced his candidacy for president of Afghanistan. Sayed has lived most of his childhood and adult life in Saudi Arabia under the wing of the Saudi Sheikhs who have been part of an aristocratic system that imposes severe restrictions on civil liberties in that country. If only the genius could solve great political

problems in the world, perhaps Einstein did not need to occupy a chair in physics at Princeton and instead he should have run for the Oval Office at the White House. What a great opportunity indeed was lost to America and humanity at large, when he was not even invited to consider any political theory!

On the other hand, other so-called Afghan leaders and specifically Hamid Karzai proved that he is no genius on any account.²⁰ He came to power with great expectations by both his nation and the world that he would be the real savior of post-Taleban Afghanistan. Seven years, day and night, the people of Afghanistan prayed for his success. Seven years he dreamed that he has succeeded. Seven years people lived a life of illusion of false hopes and of failed policies for peace and prosperity. They started openly blaming their president and together with him his supporter, the United States of America. Neither was able to bring a semblance of order or organization to Afghanistan let alone a working democracy. Seven years after ascending to power and facing tough questions about lack of progress in the country, he too has started to blame the United States and the international community for the failures of his government. For the most part his accusations have elements of truth in them. By his recent frantic efforts, including an old tactic of playing world powers against each other by threatening to get closer to Russia if the US and the West did not listen to his just demands, he has once again proven that in matters of great world politics he is a novice. The US and Russia are bound to each other and each other's policies much stronger than to let a small Afghanistan's desperate president imbalance their relations. Soon after the appeal of Karzai to Russia for assistance and Russian agreement of sorts, Russia announced its support for the US efforts in Afghanistan. On the other hand the Afghans see their former northern neighbor as the root cause of their miseries and would not readily trust her lest it would betray their trust again.

So, again finding of a skipper for the Afghan ship in a raging sea of problems seems to be important enough for the Afghans, for the US and for the world at large. A former child genius may or may not be the solution, but a weathered, experienced and down to earth politician whose hands are not reddened with the blood of the innocent, who has no fear of the warlords and who can gather an expert team of patriots for his cabinet and establish a political organization from the grass root representing the majority's needs and aspirations would. It is important that the leader should not be dependent on foreign powers and must be recognized as a true national figure.