

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/19012014-unlearned-lessons-history-afghanistan-iraq-syria-lebanon-oped/>

Unlearned Lessons of History: Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon – OpEd

By Keshav Prasad Bhattarai

January 19, 2014

Lebanon — a country that has a history of some seven thousand years and a country that was renowned for its peace and prosperity in Middle East just before 1975 — is at the risk of becoming a *Kurukshetra* of devastating sectarian proxy war between Sunni Muslims and Shiites backed by Saudi Arabia and Iran.

According to a Time report, experts are convinced that the war fought in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon is not three different wars; but they are the one fought on three countries and have every possibility to rip the entire Middle East apart.

On January 11, an American legislator Frank R Wolf has written in the opinion page of the Washington Post with a title that says, “How Obama is losing South Sudan” It was the country the United States had midwived to create. The man the United States picked to rule South Sudan is also rife with corruption and has little room for dissent. Not surprisingly, the newest nation that was born in July 2011 along the ethnic line – is heading into a civil war, and thereby is in the way to join “the notorious ranks of failed states”, Wolf concluded.

On January 17, according to Reuters, a Taliban suicide bomber and gunmen attacked a restaurant popular with foreigners in the heart of the Afghan capital Kabul, killing 21 people that include three UN staff, the top IMF official in Afghanistan and other three Americans.

A recent CNN poll has just revealed that only 17% of those Americans questioned say they support the 12-year-long war in Afghanistan; some other 82 Percent were opposed to the longest war the U.S. fought in its history. However, in October 2001 in a similar opinion poll, 90 percent of Americans had supported U.S. military action in Afghanistan.

Startlingly, on the other hand, Hamid Karzai during a press conference in New Delhi, on December 14, made a bitter remark that he no longer trusts the United States. It is a matter to note that America itself, had installed Karzai as the Afghan President after it ousted the Taliban led government in 2001. Hamid Karzai even did not pay heed to the repeated concern expressed by Obama administration while releasing dozens of prisoners accused of attacking Americans.

Similarly, earlier Karzai had refused to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) that intended to shape U.S. military presence in Afghanistan after NATO's troop withdrawal by the end of this year 2014.

Following to it, the Washington Post revealed that the “new national intelligence estimate of the Afghan war affirms” that this military “adventure was ill-conceived” and was “poorly executed” throughout. By any light, the longest war in U.S. history “has been a wasteful failure, and the sooner we're out of it, the better”, the Post story published on December 31 views.

Two days earlier, on December 29, Ernesto Londoño, Karen De Young, and Greg Miller in the same newspaper — while giving reference to the newest American intelligence assessment — predicted that the gains the United States and its allies have made earlier are likely to have been significantly eroded by 2017. Intelligence assessment that includes input from the country's 16 intelligence agencies say that even if the U.S. continues to maintain a few thousand troops and continued economic aids to Afghanistan, the situation will hardly improve.

Experts who are putting close eyes on the development in Afghanistan in relation to Al Qaeda and Taliban have endorsed that the Obama administration's “false narratives” is going to endanger U.S. national security.

A news report published by The New York Times (January 10,2014) stated that the Radical Sunni militants aligned with Al Qaeda in their bid to seize control of Falluja and Ramadi, two of the most important cities in Western Iraq, burnt out police stations, freed prisoners from jail and occupied mosques. Al Qaeda banners flying over these two cities where the Americans had fought some of the costliest battles in Iraq has not only raised painful memories, but also the renewed questioning about the efficacy of outside efforts to resolve the deep and bitter conflicts of the Middle East – the New York Times, continues. Indubitably, control over these two cities in Al Anbar region bordering Syria and Jordan would give Al Qaeda a great strategic advantage in the Middle East and North Africa.

A report (August 2013) prepared by Anouar Boukhars for Hivos — an international development organization based in Netherlands, FRIED a European Think Tank for Global Action and Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs — has stated that while violent extremists are being subdued in one area, new hot spots of confrontation are emerging. When Al Qaeda and its

transnational affiliates are forced out of one of their safe havens, expanding the threat boundaries manifold – they come to exploit security vacuums in much of North Africa and Sahel region.

In April 2013, UN Security Council's Group of Experts has prepared a report collecting information from investigators made after 28 visits to 15 countries in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, including 10 visits to Libya. Quoting this report international news agencies have mentioned that after NATO backed rebellion toppled Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, a dreadful power vacuum have been created in Libya following a weak and poor governance. Owing to this, non-state actors, terrorist and criminal elements in Libya, seized weapons and military materials from the state arsenals; they were trafficked out of the country, and transported to neighboring countries at an alarming rate. This way the Libyan weapons have been fueling conflicts in Mali, Syria, Lebanon, and elsewhere in the Arab region.

Cost of War and Future challenges

In a report (March 2013) prepared by Linda J. Blimes for Harvard University, says that the “Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, taken together, will be the most expensive wars in US history – totaling somewhere between \$4 to \$6 trillion.” According to the report, the United States has already spent almost \$2 trillion for the military campaigns and the amounts as Blimes says are only a fraction of the ultimate price tag. The biggest ongoing expense will be spent on long-term medical care and disability compensation for service members, veterans and families, military replenishment and social and economic costs.

The report further states that the Afghan and Iraq wars have added some \$2 trillion to the America's debt, contributing about 20% of the total national debt added between 2001 and 2012 forcing the country apply severe austerity measures and defense budget cuts. “The US has already paid \$260 billion in interest on the war debt. This does not include the interest payable in the future, which will reach into the trillions”, Blimes in her report mentions.

In another authoritative study — Watson Institute for International Studies of the Brown University, with contributions from more than 20 noted experts, have estimated at over 330,000, death toll — mostly civilians, in wars of Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Casualties if calculated with war related sufferings and deprivations have long past the one million mark, the study says.

The question may be raised on the achievement of the global War on terrorism. Undoubtedly, Osama bin Laden and some of his top lieutenants have been killed. Saddam Hussein is dead, but Iraq and Afghanistan are far from being peaceful and stable democracies after such a huge cost of war. The experts have widely admitted that although Al Qaeda's global leadership located along the Afghanistan- Pakistan border has been weakened by persistent U.S. strikes; they are far from being defeated.

In a testimony before U.S. Congress subcommittee on – Global al Qaeda: Affiliates, Objectives, and Future Challenges, (July 2013) Seth G. Jones – the International Security and Defense Policy expert at the RAND Corporation, has argued that since 1988, there has been a net expansion in the number and geographicscope of al Qaeda affiliates and allies over the past decade.

This growth according to Jones is contributed by several factors – the Arab uprisings, weakened regimes across North Africa and the Middle East, and the growing sectarian struggle across the region between Sunni and Shia ethnic community and the militant groups representing these communities.

Because of Al Qaeda's terrorist activities, although Pakistan has suffered a lot, but much is said and written about Al Qaeda and its affiliates receiving strategic support and sanctuary from core Pakistani leadership among political parties and security agencies. This has offered local affiliates of Al Qaeda run their operations autonomously in a wide region extending from India and Bangladesh to the Philippines and Indonesia. Similarly, Al Qaeda and its allies in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Lebanon have made their presence felt mainly in North Africa, and even in countries of West and Central Africa.

By the end of this year, United States is scheduled to withdraw its armed forces from Afghanistan. Before such withdrawal, United States wants to ensure the national security and democratic stability of the war torn country at the hands of the Afghan armed forces. Before such withdrawal, Afghanistan will have a presidential and provincial election in April 2014. The election will play a pivotal role in contributing long-term security and stability of the country. Certainly, failures of the elections will have catastrophic implications not only for Afghanistan but also to the region as a whole including the United States.

In this regard, Seth G. Jones with Keith Crane has produced another report (November 2013) for Council on Foreign Relations. The report titled -Afghanistan After the Drawdown, says that after the withdrawal, Afghan National Security Forces under the new president will have the total responsibility of ensuring peace and democratic stability of the country. The report further admits that even after its military withdrawal, United States retains some vital interests in Afghanistan, including preventing a civil war like situation where the Al Qaeda or its affiliates like Taliban could regain their control in Afghanistan.

In case, Al Qaeda and its allies return to Afghanistan, it could bring a more critical and dangerous phase of terrorism in South and Central Asia and in Middle East. China's already volatile Muslim dominated Xinxiang province bordering Afghanistan may see a serious round of Uyghur separatist movement. In such a case, the most precarious part of the development will be that Al Qaeda and its allies will be assured and confident that after the withdrawal, United States will never return to Afghanistan. It will give huge benefit to Al Qaeda in two ways – first, it will end American influence in the region and will erase its strategic credibility in the region and all over the world. The second is that Al Qaeda will come to believe that no other power on earth than America could prevent them from achieving their dream of creating a new Islamic Caliphate that includes the completely Muslim dominated countries from Pakistan and Kazakhstan to Turkey and Saudi Arabia and from there to North Africa.

Cannot We Learn the Unlearned Lessons of History?

William R. Polk, a Harvard scholar and former member of Policy Planning Council of U.S. Department of State, has written a well-researched book- Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism, and Guerrilla Warfare. In the book Polk has admitted, "We came close to genocide in Vietnam- where we dropped more bombs than all the armed forces of the world

exploded during the Second World War, poisoned or burned vast tracts of the country, and killed about two million people. Despite all this, we still lost the war. We did not learn the lesson in Vietnam. We still have not.”

There are some other incredible facts when Viet Minh took actions against the French colonial masters in 1944; they were just thirty-four, but when the war ended the casualties had reached 3.8 millions. The Naxalite movement in India started by some handful activists in a small village of West Bengal with primitive weapons like bows and arrows, have now some more than 30,000 modern weapons and explosives and their writs run across some one third of 600 Indian districts. Similarly, a small numbers of Maoist activists in Nepal when went into insurgency they had just one or two old modeled guns- that hardly fired, but within ten years they had acquired the most advanced kind of weapons available in the world. With them at their disposal, they were completely able to disrupt the state activities and could force the state negotiate with them and accept their terms.

Indeed, democracy — a rule accountable to the people through defined institutional process — driven by reason, justice, and equality, is a birth right of every individual around the world. However, building institutions of democracy and maintaining democratic political order, has become a much treacherous job for many societies. Instead, if democracy is not rooted and developed in their own societies – along with the values the society has adopted for centuries, it is very hard for a modern democracy get succeed in these societies. In real terms those values that are far stronger than the state itself, will do everything to disqualify a democracy and its sustainability.

One kind of example is available in former Soviet Union. It was a strong state – based on equality. Owing to revolutionary enthusiasm, it had destroyed traditional Russian societies and values. It created all-powerful monolithic communist structure over them, but when its political order failed, the state collapsed, because there was no society to come and rescue it from its all out fall.

China, without any precedent in world history, has made a tremendous achievement in creating prosperity for its people. Nevertheless, this unprecedented economic achievement in human history is induced by the state led growth by the same kind of monolithic communist structure. Today, the world is scarred over the issue that if the communist order collapses in China – the crisis will have far-reaching consequences to all major economies and to the other developing countries in every corner of the world as well, because in a globalized world economy China is also leading the world’s second largest economy. As in Soviet Union China lacks societies to come before to rescue if it fails.

There are some other kinds of examples. During Maoist insurgency, the state was completely absent from many parts of the country. The government existed only behind the barricaded structure of the security forces. Public goods for the people from the state were minimal or nonexistent at all, but the nation, society survived, their social life, unity, and harmony among people remained intact. People’s economy although was limited to its sustenance level, ran smoothly as if nothing happened.

Similar is the case of India. One third of its territory is rife under Maoist insurgency and some other kind of ethnic conflicts are chasing India for decades, but even then India is leading the world's largest democracy with a vibrant economy. More than state institutions, Indian societies largely play a vital role in sustaining its flourishing democracy and economy. Likewise, no modern state and society exists in Pakistan, but it is surviving under unthinkably terrible internal and external pressures.

In conclusion, traditional societies too, had and have developed and expanded secured areas for people, with some kind of inclusive distribution of political power, equality, and justice for its citizens. Had not they developed such values and institutions, it would have become impossible for them to have thousands years long history and culture so enriched and fabulous. Have we been able to develop and modernize them with the support of more inclusive democratic institutions and culture of power sharing and grievance handling and had western countries invested adequate intellectual and technical efforts in modernizing the indigenous democratic practices of these societies, we would have more peaceful and prosperous democratic world order. This would have left very small or no room for insurgency or terrorism. That in return, would also have helped western countries to get rid with some of the challenges their political system and economy are living with.