**Will Good Governance be as Easy for Taliban as Taking Over?**

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The fall of province after province in Afghanistan at mercurial rate has exposed and laid bare the claims about the capabilities of Afghan forces as fake. It has collapsed like a pack of cards upon US and Allied forces exiting the land they had occupied. As this article is being written, Taliban have just entered Kabul. US has sent in 5000 of its forces, reportedly for safe withdrawal of its personnel. Reportedly, Amrullah Saleh has just met Ashraf Ghani, and the latter ultimately left for UK.

There is no doubt about who the new rulers will be. The question is how well (or badly) will they rule? The stability in Afghanistan depends upon the equilibrium it manages to attain (or not) and this is directly related to the peace Afghanistan will (or will not) see. The government with a dominant Taliban presence is likely to include powerbrokers from central highlands and the north. Can this kind of joint sharing sustain long? The question to how Taliban wants to run the country according to its version of Islam and approach of other stake holders may prove to be the point from where paths of the uneasy bed partners diverge. This may happen sooner than later. The ethnic divisions of Afghan nation are deep and divisional. These include linguistic divisions, which, at times, may or may not overlap ethnic divisions. Unless and until the Taliban adjust different views in its frame of governance, this changing of routes may happen sooner than later creating havoc in Afghanistan, leading to civil war.

At this point, however, what challenges are facing Taliban while taking over power? This critical execution is directly going to affect the political scenario that will follow. This will be the real test.

Female education is an important element. Taliban verbally support female education, but in reality, they either do not allow them to attend school at all or if allowed, the school ends as the puberty ends. There is no policy-based approach to this issue by the Taliban. Some Kunduz districts under Taliban in 2020 allowed female education till primary. On the other hand, in Taliban-controlled areas of Helmand province, no educational facilities exist for females even at primary levels. In areas with no female educational facilities, NGO based set-ups have offered a certain degree of elementary education where none existed. Will these kinds of set-ups be allowed under the new regime? There is absolute inconsistency in policies pertaining to female education. It depends entirely on the whims of the district and provincial Taliban officials appointed.

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Taliban must have a uniform, supportive policy towards education of both boys and girls. The clear-cut message to all its commanders must be of an unequivocal support of education irrespective of gender. Expansion of education through community-based education providers is a good idea. One practical reason is lack of female teachers. Reportedly, the number of female teachers is 40 percent give or take and that too in some large cities only. People of one area do not like outsiders coming in to teach and neither can women travel long to another community for studying. There are reports of women teachers stopped from teaching. Since they had taught English Language, they were seen as govt. supporters. This applied to male teachers a well.

“By 1970, 15 percent of students enrolled in primary and secondary school were girls, and women made up 17 percent of university students- Micheline Centlivres-Demont, “Afghan women in peace, war, and exile,” The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, edited by Myron Weiner and Ali Banuazizi, p 338. Afghanistan needs to pick up reigns of female education from where it left off.

Female empowerment should be encouraged in Afghanistan, work from home or outside should be allowed, and small loan facilities should be given to woman to start home sustenance projects. Likewise, ensure across the board job opportunities for men. Alternate routes besides drug production, which is a huge source of revenue, must be sought if Afghanistan, in any foreseeable future wants to step up to sit shoulder to shoulder with other nations, subscribing to the principles of international standards.

To ensure there is no harassment of Afghans, at any level, whether or not they supported them in the past. No intimidation of anyone at any level.

What Pakistan must work on is securing its borders. It cannot afford to play host to more refugees. Pakistan must start working on the formula to return the refugees sitting in Pakistan. They cannot and must not be allowed to become owners instead of guests of the house that sheltered them. And this issue must be the first priority of Pakistani government with the incoming political dispensation of Afghanistan.

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