EDUCATE TO CIVILIZE

By: Nasratullah Rasa

BACKGROUND

Afghanistan many times called the heart of Asia is a mountainous country. It is a multi-ethnic country and its people, despite speaking many different languages stayed together during the good and bad times throughout the history. Afghanistan lost most of its infrastructure in over thirty years of war and civil unrest. During the war with soviet invaders Afghans, particularly from south and east were inspired religiously to turn into holy fighters and kick out soviet troops from their country. After the ouster of the soviet –backed government, the Mujahedeen did not succeed to form a government, bring stability, and expand rule of law throughout the country, which led to civil war between different factions of the "fanatic" freedom fighters. Civil war was followed by the harsh regime of the "Taliban", which could not bring sustainable peace and stability to the country. The Taliban further deprived Afghans from basic services including education. Moreover, thousands of youth were being sent to the conflict zone from south and east of the country in order to fight against the northern alliance. After the fall of the Taliban, Afghan people started hoping for a better future to their children and families. Unfortunately, the war continued in the country predominantly in the south and east, which put life of people in those areas in jeopardy. Children have been deprived from education as schools were closed. Additionally, people in those areas lack access to basic services including health, nutrition and education services. Lack of access to education put young boys at risk of being deployed by the Taliban and other extremist groups. Young boys are sent to fight against Afghanistan National Security forces and international troops including the US troops. They are also trained as suicide bombers and are taught hate and prejudice against the US and other western countries. The Afghan government, despite substantial gains, could not extend its reign to rural areas of the war-affected zones particularly to south and east. Most of the villages and mountainous areas in south and east turned into safe heavens for the Taliban. Another significant problem remained reduced contacts between various ethnic groups and with the rest of the world. People started having prejudiced behavior against each others as a major group of people were left out of the government benefits due to several political reasons.

THE PROBLEM

During past twelve years of war against the insurgents most of the children in war-affected zones were left without having access to education facilities and were left to the anti-western Taliban propaganda. The Taliban and other extremist groups put efforts to propagate hatred against the Afghan Government and western countries. Afghan government was labeled as being a "puppet" of "invaders". They were kept deprived from source of independent information and were left to judge based on stereotypes and prejudice against the Afghan government and its western allies. Schools are closed by the Taliban in rural areas and poor

families lack the resources to send their children to more secured areas to continue their education. Students in war affected areas either do not have schools or have very low quality education in the their schools. Very few high school graduates find their way to higher education and if it continues people will be demotivate to send their kids to schools. This can inversely affect the equal citizenship among various Afghan ethnic groups. Propaganda against democracy, western countries and other cultures is actively happening by the Taliban and other extremist groups. Mistakes of foreign troops and Afghan security forces in terms of violating local cultural norms exacerbated this propaganda. Should this practice continue a vicious cycle of having more uneducated and unaware youth and continued war and insurgency will emerge. This "unaware" and prejudiced generation will continue to serve as "Fuel" for the Taliban war machinery and will further deprive poor people from rule of law, basic social services, and economic prosperity. Moreover, these falsely inspired young people will continue to deteriorate peace and stability throughout the country including that in the secured areas of the country. During past few years we were witness that most of the unsecured areas of the country served as safe heaven to extremists from around the globe, which exerted threat to global peace and stability. If we do not take solid efforts to end this problem of lack of education and lack of access to independent information to people in the war zone they will continue to be source of threat to peace and stability in Afghanistan, in the region, as well as throughout the world. A famous poet of Pakistan, Mohammed Iqbal, once stated that if Afghanistan is in turmoil the whole Asia would be.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country and people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds lived peacefully with each other throughout the history. Afghanistan once was a bridge between various countries connected by the "Silk Rout". Later the country had relations based on mutual respect with international community. Before the soviet invasion the country had good relations with the western world including the US. During the war with soviet the US and other western countries provided remarkable support to Afghans and helped them defeat the soviet and bring freedom to Afghanistan. After the fall of the Taliban US and allies helped the Afghans to establish a democratic state. They helped Afghans to go to schools and have access to basic health services and enhance economic prosperity in the country. Afghans have many similarities with Americans such as being patriot, hospitable, honest, and dedicated to friendship and mutual respect.

In order to sustain the gains the Afghan government had through great support of International community, including the US, the Afghans should be supported to ensure long term and sustainable peace, stability, and civilization in the country and prevent export of terrorism and extremism to outside particularly to the US. In order to make sure these will happen the following suggestions should be adopted:

1. Design and implement a special education program to selected children from war-affected and in-conflict areas. Based on this program, talented children deprived from education in rural areas will be identified and will be enrolled in state of the art education facilities established in big cities. These children will be trained through intensive and accelerated curricula which will include both science and religious and

cultural subjects. The students will later serve as role models for others, which will result in further support for education in rural areas. A general during the monarchy used to have his children look very smart and tidy and he said he is doing this so other children from his village would also try to consider these children as role models and will increase their support to government and education system.

2. Troops from NATO members including the US coming to Afghanistan should be sensitized about the Afghan culture and should be provided proper information about the cultural diversity throughout the country.
3. Some education programs should be tailored and adopted to local cultural context in areas, which are outside the government control. It includes establishing “Madrasas” through support of local tribal leaders.