

April 07, 2019

International Day of Sport for Development and Peace

Yesterday, i.e. April 06 is being celebrated as International Day of Sport for Development and Peace by United Nations (UN). UN believes that sport, as a tool for education, development and peace, can promote cooperation, solidarity, tolerance, understanding, social inclusion and health at the local, national and international levels. Its intrinsic values such as teamwork, fairness, discipline, respect for the opponent and the rules of the game are understood all over the world and can be harnessed in the advancement of solidarity, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. For these reasons, states, the United Nations system and, in particular, the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace, relevant international organizations, and international, regional and national sports organizations, civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and all other relevant stakeholders are invited to cooperate, observe and raise awareness of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

Sport can be useful in development and peace because it strives for cooperation and unity. It brings nations together and urge them to come closer to one another. Different countries, in different international sport events have matches and compete one another and, in the process, push away the barriers that differentiate or divide them. Different international sport events are very much useful in bringing different countries culturally closer as well. In this way, it can provide opportunities to shun adversaries and open the prospects of peace and unity.

At the same time, different types of sports can divert the attention of the people of a nation away from many social evils, such as drugs and terrorism. Youngsters who opt for any sort of sport do not mostly get caught in the quagmire of the drug addiction and the terrorists. The developed countries of the world use sports as one of the major factors that can play a comprehensive role in fighting the social evils. They even consider that sports can be used to promote development with a country. However, the underdeveloped and the developing countries have not been able to achieve much in this regard.

In Afghanistan, as well, there are different types of sports that are played by the people in different parts of the country. Instability and disorder, influenced the growth of the sports in the country. Nonetheless, since the downfall of Taliban, efforts regarding the promotion of sports have intensified. And, there are certain games, in which Afghans have shown great talent and they have achieved international recognition. Among them Football, cricket and Taekwondo are the noteworthy ones.

Afghan football team won the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship 2013 for the first time by beating India. The cricket team on the other hand qualified for World Cup Cricket 2015 and it also qualified for T20 World Cup 2016 and even reached to the Super 10 round. Currently, Afghan cricket team is ranked among the top 10 ODI teams and top 8 T20 teams. Moreover, Afghan cricket players are famous throughout the world because of their extra-ordinary performances in different cricket leagues.

Keeping in mind the preparations and the facilities that the Afghan sportsmen get, it is really encouraging to see such great achievements by Afghan sportsmen. Afghan government requires doing more so as to facilitate different sportsmen in their respective fields. The sportsmen of the other countries enjoy all sorts of facilities that are required; therefore, they are able to show their distinction in different games.

On the other hand, our sportsmen also require support from the people. The love and support of the people fill the hearts of the players with motivation and determination and, therefore, they are able to perform at their best.

Our country is largely suffering from the influence of war, instability and disorder. The people are totally fed up of the situation and they want entertainment and amusement. And, they can achieve all these only through sports. Recently, it has been observed that what the politicians have not been able to achieve, what the sportsmen have been able to acquire. They have brought the down-trodden people of Afghanistan a ray of hope and a realization of the fact that the Afghans are capable of performing well in all fields of life. Politics has only brought rifts within the people and has divided them on ethnic lines, but the games have saved their unity and their honor.

It is really important for the authorities in Afghanistan to understand that the games and sportsmen have a higher role than just playing games; therefore, they should be given due attention and they should be provided with the facilities so that they are able to compete with other nations of the world. They have proved that having less facilities and opportunities, they are able to perform very well; so, if they are given facilities, they will really polish their abilities and will be able to perform extraordinarily on international level.

If sports are promoted properly, they have the potential to divert the attentions of the people towards positive activities and will be able to keep them away from the social evils and International Day for Sport can be best used for this purpose. Though, one day will never be sufficient to raise the standard of sport in the country, it can definitely highlight some of the key issues and acquire the attention of policy makers.

Fundamentalism, a curse or blessing for modern world!

By: Asmat Yari

16th century marks the dawn of modernization with Muslim world at the peak of civilization when West had just begun. The three Islamic states namely Safavid dynasty in Persia, Sultanate of Usmani in Asia, Iraq, Egypt and North Africa and Mughal dynasty in South Asia. The three dynasties were known for their expertise in Art of architecture, painting and construction respectively. They liked modernization and avoided adopting required changes and acquainting them with changing era. Muslims kept distant from all such cultural changes occurring steadily then, instead adopted fundamentalist approach; pursued by West pre-modernization.

Modernization began with Renaissance in Europe, which meant rebirth of knowledge. The jewel of thought provoking huge collection of knowledge thought out by ancient philosophers and scientists, was buried deep down by ignorance stricken societies from ancient past to 14th century, was searched out. The Renaissance was a cultural movement that profoundly affected European intellectual life in the early modern period. Beginning in Italy, and spreading to the rest of Europe by the 16th century, its influence was felt in literature, philosophy, art, music, politics, science, religion, and other aspects of intellectual inquiry. Renaissance scholars employed the humanist method in study, and searched for realism and human emotion in art. Renaissance humanism was an activity of cultural and educational reform engaged by scholars, writers, and civic leaders who are today known as Renaissance humanists.

Before Renaissance the dignified work of many ancient social and political scientists got under-shadowed. One of the mind blowing ancient philosophers and scientists, Aristotle originated the study of formal logic; enriched almost every branch of philosophy and made numerous contribution to science, before 300BC. Implicit in his writings is the attitude that every aspect of human life and society may be an appropriate object of thought and analysis; the notion that universe is not controlled by blind chance, by magic, or by whims of unreliable deities, but that its behavior is subject to rational laws; the belief that it is worthwhile for human beings to conduct a systematic inquiry into every aspect of natural world; and the conviction that we should utilize both empirical observations and logical reasoning in forming our conclusions. This set of attitudes after being revived, in contrary to traditionalism, superstition, and mysticism has not only profoundly influenced western civilization but proved to be turning point in the course of their history.

Influenced by the knowledge of ancient philosophers and scientists the emphasis placed on man, his intellect, and his life on Earth. Since then, evolution of thought was encouraged, reason and logic based opinion and explanation was supported and rich investments were made on new discoveries. The culture of seeking knowledge based on rational approach was developed. People began looking into future than past. The new inventions were planned. It was rational realistic discourse of thinking and perceiving the natural phenomenon that fruited the modern technological advancements.

Modernists believe in science, technology, expertise and especially education as the grand solution to societal weaknesses. Presenting educational development as instrument to nation-building and socioeconomic development, recommending the implementation of a progressive curriculum - with an emphasis on practical, adult, and teacher training in a national system of education, as a basis for self-development have led the modern world ahead to accomplishment. Instead of being dominated by tradition, societies undergoing the process of modernization typically arrive at governance dictated by abstract principles of rationalism and

liberalism. Modernism coined with rationalism and liberalism have come forth to sort out a sustainable salvation to human social, political and scientific problems.

In modern sense, rationalism is any view appealing to reason as a source of knowledge or justification. In more technical terms, it is a method or a theory "in which the criterion of the truth is not sensory but intellectual and deductive". Liberalism on the other hand is a broad political ideology based on the ideas of liberty and equality. Generally, liberals support ideas such as capitalism, constitutionalism, liberal democracy, free and fair elections, human rights and the free exercise of religion; almost all Islamic countries across the globe is devoid of these characteristics.

A fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject. Islamic Fanatics and fundamentalists laid strong emphasis to Islamic fundamentals followed by interpretation of a specific version of Islam. The fundamentalists restrained themselves to fundamentals of Islam i.e. Quran and Sunnah. They strongly condemned rational approach and considered that in contrary to Islamic teachings; suppressing logic and reason based on interpretation of natural phenomena; instead, maximum potential effort is exerted on memorization than encouragement to search and seek new evolutionary thoughts. Freedom of thoughts that could seek new reasonable interpretation to problems was strongly discouraged; stating that every problem finds its solution in Islamic teachings, and any rational extension is unacceptable. The door to rationalism is closed and Islamic civilization is pushed to extreme darkness.

Muslim fanatics have affected the true and malleable icon of religion badly after its deepened politicization. Islam has become the most publicized religion with members who display fanatic tendencies. Ever since Osama bin Laden's fatwa in 1998, the world has known about radical jihad. Bin Laden's concept, though, is very different from the actual meaning of the term. In the religious context, jihad most nearly means working urgently for a certain godly objective, generally a positive one. There are portions of the Qur'an where military jihad is used. In fact Jihad in these uses is always defensive. 'Jihad' doesn't endorse acts of military aggression, but 'jihad' is invoked in Qur'anic passages to indicate how uses of force are always subject to restraint. This kind of jihad differs greatly from the kind most commonly discussed today. The Islamic state of Afghanistan, with Shariah courts, established during the reign of Taliban, accompanied by immense human rights violation, prevalent social injustices, great suppression of women, mass massacre of innocent citizens, suspension of fundamental rights i.e. liberty, expression and exercising one's religion.

Societies living in the domain of fundamentalism, including that of Muslims, suffer deepened frustration due to elevating moral corruption, terrorism, extremism, lawlessness, inequality, suspension of rights of expression, liberty, equality, extreme denunciation of logic and reason, exercising one's religion and disregarding rich human values based on flawed discrimination of race, caste, gender, religion and region.

To give a rational ending, man must go for modern thoughts comprising realism, naturalism, rationalism and liberalism being equated with human being who stands supreme; supplied with the aptitude to bring about desired and required changes in the world we dwell and capable of building worldly heaven by countless effort; surpassing one's potentials and talents vanishing blind practices and leading towards intellectual illumination. Hence, a vibrant, democratic, potent, progressive, modern and liberal world can't be dreamt unless modernism and liberalism defeat fundamentalism.

The writer is an educationist, social and human rights activist. He can be reached at asmatyari@gmail.com.

Climate Justice Versus Populism

By: Stella Schaller and Alexander Carius

The first polls are in. The upcoming European Parliament elections could deliver up to 25% of seats to Euroskeptic right-wing populist forces like Italy's League party, France's National Rally (formerly the National Front), and Germany's Alternative für Deutschland. With such parties already members of governing coalitions in seven European Union member states, influencing national and European policy agendas, the risk to climate-change policy is evident.

According to a new report, seven of 21 right-wing populist parties in Europe explicitly question climate science, while 11 take either no stand or an inconsistent approach. During the last two legislative terms, the majority of right-wing populist parties voted against every EU climate and sustainable-energy policy proposal.

Meanwhile, the consequences of inaction - already growing in severity in many parts of the world - are beginning to bite in Europe. Last summer's extreme droughts contributed to forest fires in Greece, Portugal, and Sweden, and crop failures in the Baltics, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and Scotland. Fish suffocated in the Rhine river. The economic losses, particularly in agricultural production and domestic maritime transportation, amounted to billions of euros.

These are mere previews of what is to come if aggressive action is not taken urgently. Yet, rather than addressing the climate challenge, right-wing populist parties are seeking to win support by stoking existing frustrations with the "ruling elites." This is exemplified by the United Kingdom's 2016 vote to leave the EU and, more recently, the violent Yellow Vest protests in France.

The populists' narratives, however, often reflect a misdiagnosis - willful or otherwise - of Europe's condition. Yes, inequality has risen sharply, but that is not a result of excessively left-wing policies. The real problem is divisive economic thinking that treats competition as the defining characteristic of human relations.

The populist habit of demonizing all progressive policies, including those meant to advance sustainability, will only do more harm. But so will disregarding all of the populists' criticisms of climate policy. Despite their manipulative framing, these criticisms often reflect legitimate concerns.

One cannot dispute, for example, that the climate debate so far has been largely technocratic, often neglecting social realities. But by reinforcing the impression that climate action is a ploy to benefit the elite, populist

rhetoric has exacerbated distrust of governments, multilateralism, and even science, thereby eroding the very foundation of effective action.

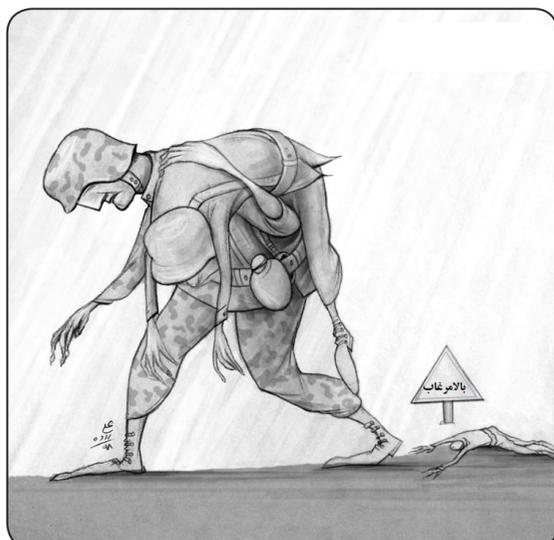
Mainstream political parties - and proponents of climate action more generally - must do a better job of understanding why populists' criticism resonates with so many. In particular, they must acknowledge that, without proper management, efforts to advance globalization and tackle climate change can carry high - and unfairly distributed - costs. That is precisely the message that the Yellow Vest protests, which were triggered by a fuel-tax hike that was not embedded in a broader social-reform or redistributive strategy, were supposed to send. In order to rebuild trust, policymakers should discuss trade-offs and acknowledge uncertainties more transparently.

To some extent, this message is already being heeded. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the proposed Green New Deal in the United States, and the "just transition" movement all aim to ensure that climate strategies are not just effective, but also fair and embedded in holistic policy frameworks. But more should be done. For example, Europe-wide energy cooperation should stress diversification and grid integration to benefit peripheral regions and poorer segments of society, as well as the reduction of energy imports.

Even as we take into account legitimate criticisms, however, we must push back against the destructive effects of populist narratives, which are often characterized by fearmongering and opportunism. This will require proponents of climate action to promote alternative narratives that foster enthusiasm for genuine political and social change. They must persuade voters that climate action will become a means of raising living standards, advancing social justice, ensuring a healthy environment, modernizing the economy, and increasing competitiveness.

Right-wing populist parties may well gain ground in May's European Parliament elections. But that does not mean that climate action must fall by the wayside. The key to success will be for those who recognize the vital importance of climate action to advance robust, credible strategies centered on social and economic fairness. If placed at the core of a new European political narrative, a just climate transition could help Europe to escape the populist trap.

Stella Schaller is a project manager in the field of climate diplomacy at Adelphi, a Berlin-based think tank. Alexander Carius is Founder and Managing Director of Adelphi.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida
Vice Chairman / Exec. Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie
Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019
www.outlookafghanistan.net