

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



April 08, 2017

Cognizance about Society

It is important for a human being to be well aware of the society wherein he lives. He needs to have such a cognizance because it would be possible for him to understand his role, status, rights and responsibilities. In this way he would be able to play a positive role in the society.

Socio-political awareness helps the individuals in the society to make maximum use of collective life as it is through social life that human beings have made marvelous achievements. The tasks and accomplishments, which are otherwise impossible to be fulfilled, become very usual and are attained without much effort through cooperative undertakings. Socio-political consciousness is not one of the qualities that exist within human instincts. It has to be developed within him through proper nourishment and inculcation. Socialization plays a very important role in this regard. Children who are born in a society do not necessarily become social in the real sense of the word. Especially in today's society when the people have become very much mechanical and materialistic it is difficult to find children get easily associated with the social and political groups. Social isolation is widespread and social interactions are now maintained through technology. In such a scenario it is really important that children are socialized appropriately and this has to be inculcated in them that their relation with the society is of great importance and they have a responsibility towards the environment wherein they live.

Family can play a tremendous role in this regard. As family is the very first institution wherein human beings experience their social lives, the attitude, manners, thinking and ideas that are developed in the very beginning of family life are really very difficult to forget. Parents who are able to give proper time to their children and share love and affection with them have the capacity to make their children responsible social and political beings. Cooperativeness among the family members makes them realize how they can create synergies through collective efforts and make human beings truly human.

Schools, colleges and universities can also play a tremendous role, but ultimately it is the overall society wherein the individuals get their education and experiences of socio-political life. Therefore, they have to acquire everything from the society. There are certain ways that can be adopted within the societies by the individuals to develop socio-political consciousness.

One of the most important steps in this regard is to have the courage to play a role within a society in a constructive manner. Solution-oriented attitude can play a tremendous role in this regard. An individual needs to make sure that he has a role, in some way or the other, in the resolution of conflicts within the community or society. Some people try to avoid conflicts and remain limited to their comfort zone; however, such an attitude would never help them be a responsible being. Apart from the resolution of the conflict, an individual must strive not to let the conflict be built and go out of control. In short, he needs to play an active role in the conflict and stop hiding himself behind others in such situation. For being socially aware it is necessary that an individual should enhance his sensitivity towards the social justice and harmony. He should have the capacity to judge others and their actions as per the demands of justice not as per their social status, appearance or wealth. He needs to understand what the basic rights of the human beings are and must strive to take care of them.

An important way of achieving socio-political cognizance is to have more information about the society around. It is important for an individual to know about the social issues and evils and try to play a role, no matter how small, in their eradication. Today, in human societies there are evils like poverty, racism, discrimination, sexism and some others; they all play their role in making human societies suffer. It is important for an individual to know them, accept them as issues and strive to oppose them in certain ways.

It is definitely easier to live a lonely life and always be confined to one's comfort zone. However, it is really important for socio-politically conscious individual to come out of his comfort zone and be counted within the social life. It is also important that an individual should be the part of diversity, and must strive to intermingle with others so as to learn from them. It will also develop a sense of tolerance for others and supports in maintaining harmony.

Showing compassion and empathy can play an incredible part in getting closer to others and tightening the social bonds. Realizing the pain of others when they are hurt and understanding their position is really imperative to invigorate the social responsibility. Courtesy and responsiveness are also necessary in this regard.

It is also important for an individual, who desires to develop socio-political cognizance, to be ready to listen to others and ask them for feedback regarding his attitude and behavior. Nonetheless, it should be kept in mind that the boundary between what is social and what is personal should never be violated as it is one of the basic requirements of consciousness. Being overly social may disrupt the social bonds and affiliations, and may even generate conflicts.

Syria's War Goes from Bad to Worse

By Hujjatullah Zia

The Syria's conflict, which started in 2011, has changed into a highly perilous game. The rights and liberty of the non-combatants are left at the mercy of militancy and individuals, mainly women and children, burn amidst violence and bloodshed. More than 465,000 people has been reportedly killed, more than a million wounded and over 12 million have been displaced. Within six years of war, however, there has been no outcome. The graph of casualties heightens which increases the sufferings and anguish of the Syrians.

The "Arab Spring", which led to the downfall of Tunisian President Zine El Abidin Ben Ali and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, will be a pyrrhic victory for the Syrian's freedom fighters. Now the last gleam of hope sparked by the negotiation between the Assad's regime and Syria's fighters has been disappeared. Things went downhill with the Tuesday's deadly attack in the rebel-held Iqlib province, which drew widespread international condemnation. This chemical attack led to large fatalities and outraged the public conscience. Hence, the conflict came to a stalemate and it is really hard to be brokered.

The Free Syrian Army (FSA) was formed on July 2011 after 15 boys were detained and tortured for having written graffiti in support of the Arab Spring with the aim of overthrowing the Assad's regime. The conflict broke out between Assad's regime and Syrian Army. The victory of Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt sowed the seed of hope in the heart of Syrian's freedom fighters. Who could predict the indescribable pains and sufferings of the Syrians and the large-scale casualties!

The conflict has become very complicated with the involvement of foreign powers in one hand, and the firm foothold of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) on the other hand. The US-led coalition forces have targeted the ISIL group since 2014. Similarly, Russia launched its military attack against the ISIL and rebel groups on September 2015.

Following the chemical attack, the Donald Trump's administration has shown strong reaction and reportedly fired 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a military airfield in Syria which is the US first direct military action against Syrian government forces in the six-year-old conflict. The attack has been condemned by pro-Assad's regime and supported by anti-Assad. The strike came despite a warning from Russia of potential "negative consequences" if Washington carried out military action in Syria.

Recently, the Assad's opposition group lost significant territory and leverage in Syria, for it is fighting both the Syrian government and hardline armed groups including the ISIL and Jabhat Fateh al-

Sham (JFS), which will minimize the chance for a peaceful solution. On Wednesday, Trump had decried the suspected attack - which killed at least 86 people, including 27 children, and wounded more than 500 - as an "affront to humanity".

Taking the oath of office, Trump pledged to eradicate "Islamic terrorism" from the face of the Earth. He vowed to intensify attacks against the ISIL group.

The tragic incidents and heart-wrenching stories make frequent headlines on national and international newspapers and people are affected, all around the globe, by unrest and militancy in one way or another. Despite the claims made by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) after World War II, the sufferings of mankind have not been mitigated. There is a strong sense of fear and disappointment in the public air and the rights and freedoms of all individuals, mainly the women and children, are violated in the worst possible way.

With the escalation of militancy in Syria, the terrorist groups such as ISIL and JFS will fish in the troubled waters and continue their destructive role more confidently. In my previous commentary about the Syria's issue, I pointed out that terrorist groups will do their best to hamper the peace talks for having no role in this regard. Before the terrorist groups act as whistle blower, the chemical attack left no room for negotiation. No doubt, the unmitigated conflict in Syria will pose great threat to the fundamental rights of the public and also pave grounds for ISIL group to capitalize on the situation.

If worse comes to the worst in Syria, the civilians will bear the brunt of the militancy. The humanitarian law is violated to a great extent by all warring parties. In brief, civilians are highly vulnerable to militancy. At worst, the ISIL group kills men and rapes women on the grounds of their racial and religious backgrounds. The flagrant violation of human rights in Syria is a great cause for concern and must be stopped in some ways.

Foreign countries will have to alleviate the sufferings of the war victims and broker peace talks between the two warring sides in Syria rather than compounding the challenges. Currently, terrorism is a global challenge and counter-insurgency must be the first priority for the world vis-à-vis human rights protection.

It is believed that human crisis is a stain on the collective conscience. The tragic stories of war victims and high graph of civilian casualties put the international instruments and world's concern, for human rights violation, under question. In brief, the world should not let the Syria's conflict get worse - it is possible through brokering peace talks and promoting counter-insurgent strategy.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com

Populism at the Barrel of a Gun?

By Sławomir Sierakowski

So far, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Polish Law and Justice (PiS) party Chairman Jarosław Kaczyński's "illiberal" counterrevolution has meant cracking down on the independent judiciary, public media, and - in the case of Orbán's government - even private universities, such as Budapest's Central European University. But now it is apparent that even the military may be brought under the control of a single political party. In Poland, the PiS is carrying out a revolutionary reorganization of the army, the likes of which have not been seen since the imposition of communist rule.

A recent Ministry of Defense communiqué reveals the sheer scale of the changes the PiS is demanding, as well as their political underpinnings. "Minister of Defense Antoni Macierewicz has implemented wide-scale staffing changes at the highest levels in operational units, replacing officers selected by Civic Platform," the communiqué reads. "In the General Staff, these changes encompass 90% of command positions, and 82% in the General Command."

Kaczyński's claim that the now-dismissed officers were connected to Civic Platform (the former ruling party) is completely groundless. After his own shocking dismissal, Miroslaw Różański, General Commander of the Polish Armed Forces, pointed out the absurdity: "I received my first star from President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the second from Lech Kaczyński, and the third from Bronisław Komorowski." Only Komorowski was with Civic Platform.

Meanwhile, Macierewicz has also barred military officers from corresponding directly with Polish President Andrzej Duda, even though the president is the supreme commander of the armed forces under the Polish constitution, and Duda has faithfully carried out all of Kaczyński's commands.

Even before these recent changes, civil-military relations had become increasingly strained since the PiS government took office in 2015. Prior to assuming power, the party had indicated that Jarosław Gowin, a moderate former justice minister from the PiS-allied Poland Together Party, would be appointed defense minister. But when the new government announced its cabinet, Macierewicz, one of Poland's most extreme politicians, was named instead.

While in office, Macierewicz has fostered the "Smoleńsk cult," which promotes the paranoid fantasy that European Council President Donald Tusk and Russian President Vladimir Putin are responsible for the 2010 plane crash that killed Kaczyński's brother, then-Polish President Lech Kaczyński, and 95 others. At this year's Munich Security Conference, Macierewicz mentioned the crash, along with Russia's incursions into Ukraine and Georgia, as "examples of Russian aggression" that make NATO necessary. He then appealed to NATO to help investigate the crash, even though it has long since been ruled an accident. Not surprisingly, NATO did not take Macierewicz's request seriously.

Shortly after assuming office, Macierewicz earned the nickname "Minister of National Disarmament," when he canceled a carefully negotiated contract for the purchase of 50 Caracal helicopters from the manufacturer Airbus Helicopters. As a result, French President François Hollande called off a planned trip to Poland. Macierewicz then responded by declaring that Poland would purchase new helicopters from the United States, only to

suggest soon after that Poland would produce its own helicopters jointly with Ukraine, or perhaps restart negotiations with Airbus. He caused further diplomatic embarrassment, when he falsely accused France of selling two Mistral-class assault ships to Egypt, in order to deliver them to Russia, in contravention of international sanctions.

Macierewicz has also systematically humiliated Poland's military personnel. His spokesman and chief of staff, Bartłomiej Misiewicz, is a 26-year-old former pharmacy assistant who does not have a college degree. In December 2015, Macierewicz had Misiewicz direct a late-night raid by Polish military police on a NATO counterintelligence center in Warsaw - an episode that culminated in an investigation by the Polish Prosecutor General's office (which is, however, subordinate to the government). But the most shocking episode came when Misiewicz visited military units and demanded that servicemen and officers salute him and address him as "Minister," an honor not usually accorded to people in his position. When General Waldemar Skrzypczak - the former commander of Poland's Land Forces and of Multinational Division Central-South in Iraq - refused to comply, he was immediately fired from the Military Institute of Armament Technology.

There is only one plausible reason why an extremist like Macierewicz would be entrusted with such an important position, and why a loyal president would be cut off from the army: Kaczyński needs someone who will not hesitate to use the army to suppress public protests if needed. As Radek Sikorski, a defense minister under the previous Civic Platform government, recently pointed out: "This kind of behavior is characteristic of people who believe that the army can be used to maintain power."

Likewise, Adam Michnik, the editor-in-chief of the national daily newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza, has accused the current PiS government of carrying out a "creeping coup" according to its own variant of "Putinism." Indeed, to understand why a political party would seek direct control over the military, one need look no further than Russia and Turkey.

Still, by elevating Macierewicz to this level, Kaczyński has created new problems for himself. As the high priest of the Smoleńsk cult, Macierewicz enjoys strong support from Radio Maryja, a Church-owned broadcaster influential among Catholic extremists. Owing to this base of support, Macierewicz is now the only cabinet official who can get away with not listening to Kaczyński. This was evident when Macierewicz, springing his latest surprise, moved to limit Poland's role in Eurocorps - an integrated military unit built around a core Franco-German brigade. Kaczyński has long called for a common European defense strategy, so Macierewicz's decision suggests that something strange is afoot within the PiS.

Given Poland's national-security concerns, why would Macierewicz need to risk his country's relations with its allies by recalling the 120 Polish Eurocorps officers currently based in Strasbourg?

One likely explanation is that Macierewicz's decimation of the officer corps has left Poland with an officer shortage. What remains to be seen is whether the PiS leadership is trying to stack the army with loyalists or is maneuvering to seize control back from Macierewicz. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Sławomir Sierakowski, founder of the Krytyka Polityczna movement, is Director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Warsaw.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net

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