

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



August 07, 2017

## US-Russia Tie and its effect on Afghanistan's Evolution

To show backlash against the recent sanction posed by the US, Kremlin issued a decree for the expulsion of about 800 staff members of the US diplomatic centers in Russia. Although, at the last days of its mission, the Obama administration expelled a number of Russian diplomats from its territory, Moscow closed its eyes to the issue and did not resort to a tit-for-tat act so as to avoid aggravating mutual tension.

It was estimated that with Trump's administration, the US-Russia relations would come to a new phase. In addition to thawing relations between the two countries, their ties were believed to resolve many regional and global challenges. But this dream did not come true and the relation of both world's nuclear powers hit the rock bottom and may change into the time of cold war and beyond it.

Within the last three years, the US-Russia tension escalated regarding several issues and was compounded since 2014. Ukraine, a state in Eastern Europe, is one of the controversial issues between the two countries.

The Russian President Vladimir Putin calls the evolution in Ukraine a sort of coup by the United States and its western allies and believes that the US constitutes crisis in this region, particularly with the expansion of NATO to the east and the deployment of anti-missile systems in Europe which posed insurmountable challenges to Russia's border. The confrontation of the two countries in Syria's conflict is the next reason behind their tension.

The US is highly enraged with the involvement of Russia in this conflict and views it one of the main sponsors of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. With Assad at the helm, Syria's issue will not be resolved, according to the US.

On the contrary, Moscow considers US responsible for the protracted war in Syria saying that Washington has prolonged the conflict and extended the crisis in the Middle East through its political and military support to the Damascus opposition.

The US is highly frustrated with the Russia's interference in its presidential election and calls it a big betrayal. In spite of the fact that Russia denied this claim, US officially accused Russian government of conducting cyberattack against its political organizations declaring it aimed to disrupt America's electoral process.

It was speculated based on the mentioned facts that Trump will seek to change the US-Russia's confrontation to a sustainable interaction. However, it seems that Trump, despite his probable tendency, could not break the prevalent structure or heighten the burden of accusation through cultivating a close relation with Moscow. Therefore, he preferred the public demand to his personal desires and signed new sanctions against Moscow.

Although the two countries had never enjoyed a satisfactory relation, yet this tie will come up with more challenges since the friction between the interests of both countries is predictable in a broad perspective and a serious mutual confrontation will be in the offing. The issue of their diplomats is likely to be resolved through negotiation; however, the political relations between Kremlin and White House will remain strong - which will put an adverse effect on many countries.

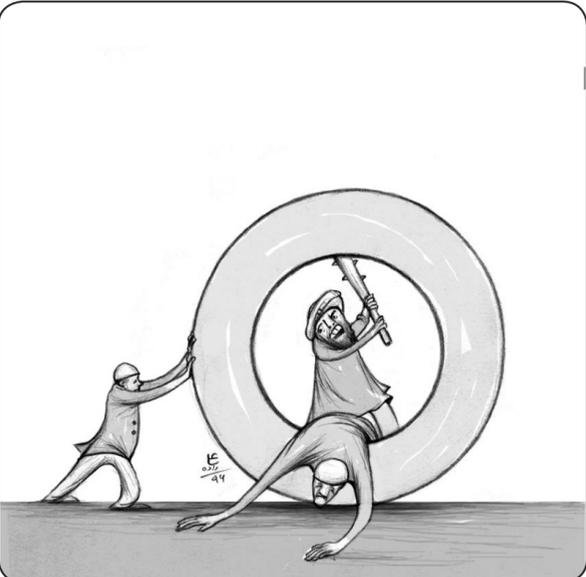
Afghanistan is one of the countries that will be affected via the said relations since this country is in an abnormal state. The protected war led to the emergence of radical groups with different ideology that paved the ground for the involvement of many countries in this issue. Russia has given up its non-interference policy regarding Afghanistan's issues, particularly in recent years. Backing the Taliban is one of the issues that cannot be concealed in Russia's regional policy since it supports this group as an option against ISIL. Reports say that Moscow, in addition to its political support, does not relinquish its arm assistance to this group, which has reinforced the Taliban more than ever before.

It is feared that such supports will be compounded and Moscow fuels the conflict through equipping the Taliban so as to hamper the victory of its political opponent the US as it is doing in Syria.

It is also a matter of concern for Afghan officials that the more the Taliban are equipped and inspired the more Afghan government will sustain harm.

Further, it will put Afghan government under question that why the Taliban are able to continue the war for years.

The government will have to prioritize ensuring security and stability and use all its possible equipment in defeating the enemy and gaining upper hand militarily. It should further utilize all political and diplomatic options in the best possible way and strengthen its ties with its international allies. Otherwise, if this trend continues, the situation will go from bad to worse.



## Equality in Human Society

By Dilawar Sharzai

Human beings, living in today's world of ours, seem to be losing contentment and satisfaction. There are many incidents taking place in different parts of world that depict that human beings are not able to attain bliss and fulfillment that are really essential for them and that they should have achieved by now. There are marked short comings both in human personality and human societies that have been proving as factors that are pushing human beings towards instability and disorder. The societies and states that have been formed in today's world, though have evolved with the passage of time, still possess dominant shortcomings.

These shortcomings if not met on time, the discrepancies and discontentment would keep on rising and disturbing the human beings, societies and the governments. If we analyze today's societies, we come to know that there are some very basic requirements that are missing. Among those requirements, justice, equality and rights are the most essential ones. Though all of them are necessary, we do not have much discussion available about the concept of equality. So, this particular article is to have a discussion about the concept in order to have its basic understanding.

Giovanni Sartor has rightly observed that the term equality "has so many facets and so many implications that after we have examined it from all angles we are left with a feeling of not having really mastered it."

In common parlance the term equality is used for identity of treatment and identity of rewards. However, this is not a correct use of the term because absolute equality is not possible. Again some scholars assert that nature has created men equal.

However, this is also not correct because some people are physically stronger while the others are weak. Similarly, some are white complexioned while others are black; some are dull while others are intelligent and sharp. In short, nature has not created all as equals and there are differences in strength, intellect etc. among various people; therefore, absolute equality is a mere myth. Equality has been assigned both negative as well as positive meanings. In the negative sense equality means the absence of special privileges.

It implies the absence of the barriers like birth, wealth, caste, color, creed etc. in the positive sense equality means provision of adequate opportunities for all the members of the society. It may be observed that adequate opportunities do not mean equal opportunities. For example, an engineer and an ordinary laborer cannot be treated at par and provided equal wages and other facilities.

Equality in this sense is neither practicable nor desirable. Therefore, equality really means the provision of adequate opportunities to all citizens without any discrimination. Nobody should be debarred from certain facilities simply because of his status, caste, creed, etc.

In short, equality implies the following things. First, all persons should be provided with adequate opportunities for the development of the personality. Second, no class or caste or group enjoys special privileges which are not available to other members of the society. Third, there should not be any discrimination among members of society and if there is any discrimination it should be on reasonable grounds. Thus, it does not prevent special

treatment of handicapped and backward persons so that they can be brought at par with others. Fourth, rights are equally distributed among all and all have equal access to opportunities leading to authority.

The concept of equality is not basically very old, though we get some tracers of the concept in the writing of the Stoics as well as the Romans. It was only in the latter half of the eighteenth century that the concept gained popularity. The French Revolution of 1789 was largely a protest against the prevailing inequalities and the Revolutionaries adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) asserting, "Men are born and always continue to be free and equal in respect of their rights." But, it was only in the present century that effort was made to eliminate inequalities in the economic and social sphere and necessary laws were enacted to protect the interests of the workers. It was emphasized that equality in the economic sphere was more important than equality in the civil and political spheres. It was asserted that political liberty without economic equality was a myth. The decline of imperialism and colonialism and the emergence of a large number of independent states in Asia, Africa and Latin America gave a further impetus to the principle of equality. All the states began to be treated as equals at the international levels irrespective of their size, resources and importance. The war against racial discrimination and the introduction of universal franchise further strengthened the doctrine of equality.

Most of the modern states devoted great attention to the improvement of economic lot of the deprived ones to bring about economic equality. Yet, there are serious matters to be resolved in this regard.

According to modern political principles, a state should make sure that the citizens have (1) Civil Equality - Equality of all before law, (2) Political Equality - Equal rights to participate in the affairs of the state, (3) Social Equality - No discrimination among citizens on the basis of social status, caste, color, creed, rank, etc., (4) Economic Equality - Equality in the opportunities to have sound economy. Unfortunately, these equalities are not guaranteed in many countries of the world and we have discontentment among the people.

Laski has said, "Political equality is never real unless it is accompanied by virtual economic equality; political power, otherwise, is bound to be handmade of economic power." Definitely, in the absence of economic equality it is difficult to imagine a just political system. It is important to remember that economic equality does not imply that there should be equal distribution of wealth, because this sort of equality is incapable of realization.

On the other hand it means that there should not be concentration of wealth in few hands only and certain minimum standards of income should be assured to all before anyone can be allowed to have more. In other words, the basic needs of all should be met before some people are permitted to lead a luxurious life.

Prof. Laski expresses this point, "I have not right to take cakes when my neighbor is compelled to go without bread." Unfortunately, these concepts are being neglected in today's world and we see thousands who suffer because of inequality and discrimination.

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## Gulf Media Wars Produce Losers, no Winners

By James M. Dorsey

Feuding Gulf states that have pumped millions of dollars into public diplomacy appear to have done better in damaging the reputations of their detractors than in polishing their own tarnished images.

Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, all appear to fare poorly in how they are perceived, judged by a recent survey of American public opinion. The international community's response to the two-month-old Gulf crisis suggests, however, that Qatar so far has been more successful in garnering muted support for its call for direct talks to solve the crisis - a position rejected by its detractors.

In the only survey to date of public perceptions in the United States of the Gulf crisis by Britain's YouGov on behalf of Saudi Arabia's foremost English-language daily, Arab News, Qatar fared poorest in its approval rating, but Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the instigators of a diplomatic and economic boycott of the idiosyncratic Gulf state did not do much better.

Poll results showed that a mere 27 percent of the 2,263 people queried considered Qatar a friend or ally of the United States compared to Saudi Arabia with 37 and the UAE with 39 percent. Thirty-one percent identified Qatar as unfriendly or an enemy of the US. Only 16 percent of those polled associated Qatar with its hosting rights for the 2022 World Cup while 34 percent linked Qatar to being accused of supporting terrorism and 44 percent believed that Qatar's state-owned, controversial Al Jazeera television network provided a platform for militant and jihadist groups.

Arab News reported extensively on the poll, but appeared to refrain from providing a link to the original survey report. The report was also not immediately accessible on YouGov's website. As a result, it was difficult to independently evaluate the survey beyond the results published by Arab News as well as based on the questions asked. It was also not clear to what degree the poll further surveyed perceptions of Qatar's detractors and how they

compared to those of the Gulf state.

The Arab News reporting was the latest salvo in a public relations war waged by state-owned or privately-owned media on both sides of the Gulf divide that operate in an environment of highly restricted freedom of the press and often have close ties to government and/or ruling families.

The Financial Times quoted Saudi journalists as saying that they had been pressured by government to criticise Qatar. One Saudi editor described to the FT how officials have been using a mobile phone messaging group to instruct journalists on how to shape coverage and what stories to focus on. "These are orders, not suggestions," the editor said.

Focusing exclusively on the poll's Qatar-related results, Arab News editor-in-chief Faisal J. Abbas expressed "surprise" at "how quickly the diplomatic row has negatively affected 'Brand Qatar,' at least in the US... It was interesting to see that despite the billions spent by Qatar on various soft power initiatives - from education to charity to international sport - the study found that more Americans associate it with supporting terror than anything else," Mr. Abbas wrote.

Mr. Abbas made no reference to the fact that like Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have deployed huge sums to hire a battery of US public relations and lobbying firms in a bid to garner support for their positions. Nor did he discuss what return on investment they have had.

Striking a slightly more cautionary note in one of several commentaries on the YouGov poll published by Arab News, Sir John Jenkins, a former British ambassador to the kingdom, noted that "Saudi Arabia has ground to make up here, which is an important policy point for decision-makers in Riyadh: Reputation matters in the modern world and you do not improve that without a smart, targeted and sustained communications strategy."

To be continued...

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