

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



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Disparities Among Classes Have Widened

The so-called development in Afghan society since the downfall of Taliban has not been even. There are different problems that suggest that development has not taken place in the real sense. Some of the most important factors that define development in the modern sense are non-existent in Afghan society. Poverty is still rampant and the class disparities have widened. The gap between the rich and the poor has been stretched to a large extent. There are millions of the people who suffer from lack of basic requirements, while only few families possess most of the wealth of the nation. At the same time social justice is not found anywhere and the inequalities and inequities are frequent.

The stratification among different strata has intensified, which is affecting the society as a whole. The wealth that has poured in the country in the last decade does not seem to have benefited the needy people of the society rather that has been accumulated by certain authoritative people who use it for their own benefits and grandeur. Though the stratification into rich and poor classes existed in Afghan society earlier as well, but it has changed its primitive shape; even in the urban regions the stratification is more like modern upper class and lower class division.

Some argue that this stratification of the society in different strata is a necessity. They believe that it is because of interaction of various strata that the society tends to function as whole – more like functional theory in sociology. However, this argument is quiet debatable. Actually the class based setup in a society is mostly the outcome of the practice of Capitalism. Capitalism, at least in theory, tends to follow justice and demands that everyone should be gifted according to his ability. Thus people with more ability can have as much as they deserve lawfully. Further, the system of Capitalism also allows the individuals to have lawful private property. The modern countries in Europe and America that are based on Capitalism can easily be observed to be having different classes in their societies.

This system seems to be working for them, but there are controversies regarding the future of the system. In fact, if this system has been working for so many countries, there are few pre-requisites that are maintained to a varying extent by these countries that have been helping the system to develop instead of facing a failure.

First, it has been made sure that justice should be maintained in its true spirit, i.e. it must not favor only the upper class; rather the upper class itself should be treated by the law and order system in the same way as the other two classes; namely, lower, middle and upper classes.

To put it in simpler terms it can be said that social stratification has not been changed to social injustice. Second, social mobility has been made very easy in such societies. Social mobility basically means movement from one social class to another.

For example, it has not been very difficult for a person taking birth in a lower class to work hard, develop the capability and move to the middle and even to upper class. There have been equal opportunities for almost all the members of the societies to excel in their lives and become rich. The reverse has been maintained as well, i.e. the people born in rich families but not working hard, have been pushed to the lower strata. Social mobility has been able to provide some oxygen for the social setup to inhale so that it must keep on living.

It is also vital to note that in Afghanistan the wealth has poured in without much accountability and weak check and balance system, therefore, the stratification has led to sufferings. The upper class in Afghanistan cannot be said to be in the form as it exists in an industrialized society.

Rather, it includes the landlords, tribal heads and religious leaders. Both political and economic systems tend to revolve around these people who are in total control of entire wealth and its distribution. Further, it is also true that all these people do not seem to have the ability for what they are gifted.

They in pursuit of their own benefits have only made the opportunity of development favor themselves. The poor people of Afghanistan, who have been badly stricken by decades of wars, have only suffered the worst manifestations of poverty.

There are millions who do not have the basic requirements of life and are compelled to live their lives in the remotest areas, without much support and attention. Food, cloth, shelter and other requirements like education and security are non-existent for them.

And at the same time there are people who own properties worth millions of dollars. These are all the results of an intense stratification. The poor do not seem to be having many opportunities of improvements in their lives and that means that social mobility, which can provide oxygen to a stratified society does not exist, while the social injustice is on the rise. The law and order system, instead of treating everyone alike, has served as the slave of the upper-class. The current scenario if goes unchecked can bring further misery to Afghan society.



Traditional and Conventional Approach to Mirza Olang Tragedy

By Aziz Mobashir

The catastrophe in Mirza Olang area of Sar-e-Pul province and the slaughter of countless number of its residents seem unprecedented. Reports and narrative from local officials says that terrorist outfits have spilt streams of blood with great cruelty and killed scores of innocent and “defenseless” individuals without an ounce of mercy.

Reports and local officials, however, are not able to portray the depth of this catastrophe in its true form. About 50 people, mostly civilians, have reportedly been slaughtered in the most tragic way.

The succinct narrative from the media and local authorities of Sar-e-Pul province say that terrorist groups created a tragedy in Mirza Olang. Their statements suggest that the militants, after entering the area, pulled out the civilians from their houses, slaughtered, beheaded, threw from mountain and shot them dead. This short statement reflects the fact that the tragedy in Mira Olang has been unprecedented, at least within the past decade and half.

The armed opponents and terrorist groups fighting against the government not only in Sar-e-Pul but in majority of the provinces, based on a statistic conducted by security organs. The ongoing war in Mirza Olang, however, reflects the ugliest face of war and violence in the country. Although the Taliban claimed that they had targeted only those who participated in the war, yet those who survived the war have more painful narrative about this tragic issue and it is an unmistakable fact that the magnitude of catastrophe is too severe than what is reported.

First, the dissimilarity in Mirza Olang conflict, according to locals and officials, is that the Taliban and affiliates to the self-styled Islamic State (IS) have associated with each other which has ever taken place. Earlier, the two groups did not only lack an agreement but also fought bloody battles against each other. Based on this association, the official and people will have to be on alert since their allegiance will sharpen the blade of terror and violence more than ever before leaving the government and nation in a passive state.

So far, it was believed that terrorist groups, particularly the Taliban and the affiliates to IS, were in conflict and would not be aligned against the government. Nonetheless, the Mirza Olang tragedy proved the opposite and revealed the fact that their interests outshined their conflicts.

Little wonder, both the groups are radicals, being supported by outside circles and are used as pawns in the political game for the countries which pursue their interests in the destruction of others’. Thus, the future of war and counterinsurgency should

be viewed from different perspective.

The second difference in Mira Olang is the nature of war. In this episode, terrorist groups resorted to large-scale violence such as beheading, throwing from mounts, shooting and slaughtering. Unconfirmed reports say that they took a number of women and children with themselves. Afghan government and nation sustained war and violence, carried out by the Taliban, more than sixteen years. However, there is no or highly rare reports about such harsh treatment with locals or a particular ethnic group. The association of the two groups shows that escalated militancy and large-scale war will be in the offing in the country. Currently, the firm foothold of the IS group and its large-scale violence across the country is alarming and suggests the multiplication of crisis.

The third difference is the approach of government in general and approach of security organs in particular towards the issue. The officials of Sar-e-Pul say that they had warned some days earlier about crisis and attack on Mirza Olang area and constantly demanded support from central government which was remained unanswered.

After all, it is more than four days that the terrorist groups took the control of Mirza Olang, but despite the fact that Sar-e-Pul local officials urged for support, no military aid were sent for rescuing those stuck in the war or for collecting the dead bodies. This comes as 150 families are reportedly under the control of the Taliban and there seems no way for getting rid of it.

Despite any justifications by officials, people might misconstrue this issue. Considering the tragic aspect of this episode and the violent treatment of terrorist fighters with the locals, people might interpret it a deliberate negligence from the government. The government had to adopt prevent measures after being warned by local officials.

The fourth and highly painful issue is the silence of security organs. Terrorists launched massacre in Mirza Olang; however the security organs remain quiet about the destiny of hostages and their approach in this regard. Whenever an event to the extent of Mirza Olang is continued with silence, the first outcome will be a growing mistrust of people towards the government and officials. Such a silence is similar to being onlooker of the tragedy. In brief, the issue of Mirza Olang is highly shocking and different from other security and terrorist issues. Afghan people also expect different approach in this regard since traditional and conventional approach will not address the tragedy of Mirza Olang.

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What Makes a Great Leader?

By Kishore Mahbubani and Klaus Schwab

Not long ago, over dinner in Singapore, we attempted to define what qualities make a great leader. For Klaus, the five key elements were heart, brain, muscle, nerve, and soul. For Kishore, compassion, canniness, and courage were key, as was the ability to identify talent and understand complexity. The extent of the overlap is telling.

It is no coincidence that both lists begin with heart. Like Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, a leader cannot achieve greatness without showing deep empathy with his or her people – a sentiment that fuels the fight against the injustices those people may face.

Such heroic leaders are unlikely to emerge in normal times. But these are not normal times. On the contrary, today’s unprecedented inequality in many parts of the world is precisely the kind of injustice that could spur the emergence of great leaders with compassion for those at the bottom. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the young leader who most radiates hope today, was elected partly because of his commitment to helping ordinary people.

Then there is “brain” – the ability to sift through the masses of information with which we are constantly inundated, in order to make smart decisions in a complex and rapidly changing world. Here, some current leaders are showing plenty of aptitude.

For example, the Chinese and Indian economies’ continued growth and development reflects the fact that President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, respectively, understand the economic and social challenges and opportunities implied by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. They know that, in this complex context, they must develop dynamic new industries that place their economies at the frontier of scientific and technological progress.

The smart use of new technology is also helping to alleviate poverty. The one billion Indians who have signed up for an Aadhaar, their electronic identity card, now enjoy direct access to welfare benefits without bureaucratic barriers. The one billion Chinese who use their smartphones to make mobile payments now enjoy direct access to all kinds of consumer products that enhance their lifestyles.

No one has yet reliably quantified the boost to wellbeing that such technological advances produce. But optimism in both China and India is surging. According to the Pew Research Center, 87% of Chinese feel positive about their country’s current economic condition, and 82% believe that their children will be better off than they are today. Similarly, 83% of Indians feel positive about the economy, and 76% think that their children will be better off.

The third critical quality of a great leader is courage – or nerve, as Klaus puts it. The surge of refugees in Europe, especially Syrian asylum-seekers in 2015, led to an explosion of populist sentiment, with political leaders increasingly calling for borders to be closed. Weak leaders buckled under the pressure, either aligning their rhetoric with that of the populists or getting steamrolled by their fiery competitors.

Not German Chancellor Angela Merkel. She set a powerful ex-

ample by agreeing to accept one million refugees. At first, her standing with voters – and even many within her own party – sagged, to the point that some began writing her political epitaph. But her remarkable courage eventually paid off. She is now recognized worldwide as one of the strongest leaders of our time.

In his own quiet way, President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo of Indonesia has shown similar courage. Indonesia, like Europe, is confronting growing pressure from nationalist and populist voices seeking to displace the five principles of tolerance – the “Pancasila” – that underpin Indonesian statehood.

The imprisonment of Jokowi’s political ally, former Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, also known as Ahok, for blasphemy against Islam has reinforced that pressure. Yet Jokowi, like Merkel, has continued to fight back against the extremists, even outlawing the extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Of course, translating courage into positive change requires muscle – the influence and authority to take action – which requires an astute understanding of political realities. Such canniness was vital to bring about the powerful shift in Ireland’s political system, for example, with the deeply conservative country electing Leo Varadkar, a gay man of Indian origin, as its prime minister.

Pope Francis shows how these various qualities can come together to produce strong leadership. Shrewdness, courage, morality, and intelligence have underpinned his effort to change the position and perception of the Roman Catholic Church in the world.

For example, while tradition prohibits the pope from endorsing homosexuality, Pope Francis had the courage to say: “If a person is gay and seeks out the Lord and is willing, who am I to judge that person?” Likewise, Pope Francis broke from the Church’s traditional line to suggest that women exposed to the Zika virus that ravaged parts of Latin America last year could use artificial contraception.

More broadly, Pope Francis has shown courage and wisdom in embracing a more decentralized church structure, and envisioning an inclusive church that is a “home for all.” In yet another shrewd move, he pursued the turnover of senior officials at the Vatican gradually, rather than in one fell swoop. Pope Francis also has what Klaus would call the soul of a leader. Most leaders succumb, at one point or another, to the comfortable trappings of office. Yet Pope Francis continues to live a simple and uncluttered life, without the perks that are often associated with leadership, even in the religious realm. In a world that is changing more rapidly than ever, we should seek leaders who can protect and serve the interests of the people they are supposed to represent. This means not just criticizing the failings of weak leaders, but also highlighting the successes of strong ones. They may be rare, but they do exist, and we should celebrate them.

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