

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



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## Taliban-ISIL Alliance Will Hinder War on Terror

Streams of blood are being spilled and human rights are violated flagrantly amidst escalated insurgency in Afghanistan. The hotly debated issue of terrorism and national and international conferences in terms of combating insurgency and radical practices have been proved abortive. Violence and bloodshed continue unabated with the Taliban's intensified attacks and suicide bombings. Recently, the Taliban have killed a number of men, women and children in Sar-e-Pul province in cold blood after seizing the control of Mirza Olang village. It is self-explanatory that the militant fighters do not value human rights or international humanitarian law (IHL). Although the ins and outs of their recent practices in Sar-e-Pul is in mystery, rumors say that the Taliban, along with the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), have killed women and children in the worst possible way and took a number of girls hostage. A source privy to the issue said that the ISIL group - which espouses more radical ideology than that of the Taliban - is also involved in this conflict.

Ironically, the Taliban and ISIL group which were in serious conflict for their contradictory ideologies are believed to converge for the first time. Their alliance will aggravate political morass in Afghanistan and leave the deadlock of terrorism unbreakable. After all, it will bolster the morale of both the groups.

In addition, the ISIL - which seeks foothold in other countries after losing ground in Iraq and Syria - will do everything in its power to stoke sectarian violence as the ethnic minority Shiites are being slaughtered in Sar-e-Pul province.

The ISIL's practices in Iraq and Syria reveal this fact that this group aims to sow the seed of sectarianism between Shiite and Sunni Muslims. For instance, they killed and raped Yazidi women in Iraq on the grounds of their sect and beliefs.

Secondly, the association of the two militant outfits will pose threat to the entire region since they seek to extend their reach. Perhaps, this alliance is made as a backlash against the US decision about sending more troops to Afghanistan to intensify the counterinsurgency. However, the White House and Congress are in quandary about adopting a mechanism for winning the war on terror in Afghanistan - further delay will deteriorate the security situation in the country.

The reconciliation of the Taliban's and ISIL's ideologies which are at odd with each other seems to be the seamier side of the issue for compounding the conflict across the country. Both will share their tactics in war against the foreign troops and Afghan government. One of their cruel acts that has been multiplied in recent months is targeting civilians - either by the Taliban or ISIL - however the latter claims responsibility for the attacks. Therefore, the graph of civilian casualties is shockingly high. Additionally, the association of the groups will hinder the peace process. It is an unmistakable fact that if the ISIL group allies itself with the Taliban, they will refuse to hold negotiation for cherishing highly fundamental ideology. On the other hand, the tendency of Afghan government will decline for peace talks.

Afghan-Pak tribal belts are more likely to be prone to the radical ideology of the Taliban-ISIL groups. That is to say, the militant fighters will hunt for soldiers in tribal areas where radicalism and harsh mindset hold strong sway. Further, people wrestle with economic constraints in remote areas and will be lured to join militants by being offered financial aid.

The militant fighters are believed to strengthen their networks through allying themselves with one another. For example, Sirajuddin Haqqani - the head of Haqqani network - was appointed as deputy to Haibatullah Akhundzada, Omar's second successor, to survive on the one hand and to increase their attacks against Afghan soldiers and foreign forces in Afghanistan on the other hand.

There are two deciding factors which prolong war: First, they are supported ideologically in religious seminaries both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Second, the cultivation of narcotic drug in the country's soil supports the Taliban financially. After all, tribal leaders and warlords are most likely to support narcotic drug, for reaping great benefit, and hinder the government's campaign against it. Therefore, there is a decrease neither in cultivation of narcotic drug nor in insurgency. Now Afghanistan, along with its international allies and Pakistan, has to dismantle the two groups through intensifying its attacks. Besides attacking the militants, I have invariably recommended, in my commentaries, targeting the hotbed of radical ideologies and the sanctuaries of warring parties. Indeed, when the root causes of terrorism remain active, there will be no end to this war. The government will have to campaign seriously against the main factors in supporting war and violence so as to mitigate insurgency and put an end to civilian casualties.



## A Greener Grid for East Asia

By Sung-Young Kim and John A. Mathews

Not long ago, the future of nuclear power was in Asia. In 2015, nine of the ten reactors that opened globally were on the continent. But recent declarations by South Korea and Taiwan that they will "go green" have called into question nuclear power's long-term viability, at least in East Asia. Indeed, 2017 may mark the end of the region's nuclear love affair - and the start of a new one with renewables.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen have both set ambitious national agendas to boost renewable energy generation while calling for a phase-out of nuclear. For years, overreliance on traditional fuels discouraged investment in clean technologies for power generation, despite the fact that both countries are innovators in green industries, like energy storage and smart grids. Whereas 22% of South Korea's energy needs, and 14% of Taiwan's, are met by nuclear, those ratios are now set to drop dramatically.

Blueprints are still being formulated, but taken together the two countries' commitments mark a major shift in regional energy planning toward greener, cleaner technologies. Moreover, they will pave the way for increased investment in renewable-power installations, placing their countries on a new competitive footing in the regional market.

South Korea's strategy calls for a phased withdrawal from the nuclear industry, through non-renewal of existing licenses and bans on future plants.

Last month, Moon, who was elected in May and campaigned on a nuclear-free agenda, called for an increase in the use of renewables, to 20% of the country's total power generation, by 2030, up from the current 5%. He has also pledged to close ten coal-fired power plants by the end of his term in 2022. Currently, coal accounts for about a quarter of the country's energy consumption. Natural gas would be used as a "bridging fuel" during the transition to greener power.

Given that South Korea currently operates 25 nuclear reactors and had plans to build six more, the shelving of nuclear power is a significant shift in the country's energy strategy. Indeed, some have expressed doubts about the feasibility of Moon's plans. There are also questions about how the energy-policy overhaul will affect the country's lucrative export market for nuclear technology. But Moon remains resolute.

In Taiwan, Tsai is equally committed. Last year, responding to public opposition to nuclear energy in the wake of

Japan's 2011 Fukushima meltdown, Tsai vowed to make Taiwan nuclear-free by 2025. Today, coal and natural gas provide more than two thirds of the country's electricity needs, with renewables accounting for 5%. Tsai has called for the share of renewables to increase to 20% over the next eight years, with the capacity coming primarily from solar and offshore wind.

This new load would easily replace the electricity generated by the country's six nuclear reactors.

Critics contend that green technologies are not mature enough to replace traditional fuels for industrial-scale energy use. But these claims are a few years too late. Significant declines in start-up costs and energy-storage prices, as well as improved battery performance, have made renewables more competitive than ever.

As Francesco Starace, Chief Executive of Enel, Europe's largest energy company by market capitalization, told the Financial Times in June, renewables are becoming the "cheapest and most convenient way of producing electricity."

South Korea and Taiwan are not the first East Asian powers to go greener. China has been moving in that direction for years, and now leads the world in installed renewable-energy capacity. But by joining the renewables revolution, Taiwan and South Korea will make it easier for other regional players to enter the market, because expanded investment opportunities will increase competitiveness and further drive down already declining costs.

In fact, if there is one valid criticism of Moon's and Tsai's visionary goals, it is that they could be realized even faster. For example, if both leaders were to allow the purchase of renewable power from the planned Global Energy Interconnection or the Asian Super Grid, they could increase the share of green energy more rapidly.

South Korea and Taiwan have few natural resources of their own, and are heavily reliant on imported fuel to generate electricity. The introduction of competition to the national monopolies in both countries would also speed the shift to renewables.

But for now, what is most important is the precedent that South Korea and Taiwan are setting. The renewables market in East Asia is about to blossom. When it does, the region's decades-old dependence on nuclear power will finally be broken.

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## The Frame of Freedom of Expression

By Hujjatullah Zia

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right of mankind in civil societies. In the post-Taliban administration, the freedom of expression has been one of the highly controversial issues and was included in the Constitution, too. Freedom of expression is a principle that one is allowed to express their social, political and religious beliefs and thoughts in the frame of words, texts, pictures, etc. The sudden eruption of the media, including audio, video and press, after the fall of the Taliban's regime, played an instrumental role in promoting freedom of speech - which is now a dire need.

It is believed that freedom of expression in Afghanistan covers a wide range comparing to other countries. For instance, political officials are not only rebuked but also humiliated seriously via comedies, caricatures, satire, and social media. People openly express their views against the government and put their negligence under question.

On the other hand, the government is supposed to uphold the freedom of expression. Constitutionally, freedom of expression is viewed as one's natural rights - which is immune to violation.

Afghan constitution states in article 34 as, "Freedom of expression shall be inviolable. Every Afghan shall have the right to express thoughts through speech, writing, illustrations as well as other means in accordance with provisions of this constitution. Every Afghan shall have the right, according to provisions of law, to print and publish on subjects without prior submission to state authorities..." It is further stated in article 24 that "liberty and human dignity are inviolable."

The state shall respect and protect liberty as well as human dignity."

It should be noted that the immunity of freedom of expression does not necessarily mean that there is no boundaries for this freedom or one can express their thoughts at any cost. For example, our so-called intellectuals target the cultural and religious values of nation in the social media with sarcastic and bitter rhetoric which hurt the feelings of our religious nation.

However, targeting the culture and custom which are in conflict with religious tenets and Islamic values holding strong sway in tribal belts will be worthwhile - which also needs to be done in a soft tone. Attacking the beliefs of a society with biting words will not be acceptable at all. Those who intend to do so with good will, i.e., reforming the society, it will backfire on them. It is an undeniable fact that tribal custom which is con-

trary to religious sharia prevails in our society, mainly in tribal belts.

Pasthunwalai (the triable code of conduct) and tribal councils, which resort to desert court once in a while, are in conflict with Islamic and national laws. However, none will justify attacking the biting words of the so-called intellectuals in social media. It is needless to say that a number of individuals seek to introduce themselves as intellectuals through studying few books from western intellectuals. They repeat exactly what they study rather than generating new ideas. Meanwhile, a number of other individuals support and imitate them. In case of being confronted by the outbreak of public sentiment, they simply blame them for lacking tolerance. On the contrary, those who attack the society's beliefs, show no sense of tolerance in terms of their beliefs or practices - this seems a paradox.

Hence, it should be noted that there is no absolute freedom of expression. In other words, responsibility is the other side of the coin and where there is right there is responsibility. When we claim that freedom of expression is our right, we need to view its limit, too. One is not allowed to exercise their own freedoms at the cost of the freedoms of others.

It is noteworthy that the process of intellectualism has not been formed in our society. In our society, those who claim to be intellectuals are not able to generate idea but repeat the words and ideas of other real intellectuals, mainly those of western.

Freedom of expression is a great asset, and we are supposed to use it in the best possible way. A number of people in other countries, particularly where patriarchal or despotic regime or sultanate rule, either lack this asset or this freedom is highly restricted. Under the system of sultanate, rebuking government is considered a crime. In some democratic countries, the range of freedom of expression is not to the extent of ours.

Unluckily, a large number of people who lack the very basic knowledge seek to write about an issue in social media for being noticed disregarding the fact that their words are worthless.

After all, using foul languages in social media in our country is changing into a normal practice. It is believed that keeping silent will be far more honorable than the negative usage of social media.

On the other side, since the government is committed to uphold the freedom of speech, it will have to support it strongly and prosecute the violators - be it simple individuals or government officials.

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