

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

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ISIL Remains a Serious Threat

Terrorist groups seek to extend their reach despite being combated by the world. The fear of terrorism looms large. With the emergence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) which is losing its territory in Iraq, terrorism posed stronger threat to the world. Spain, a staunch NATO ally, carved out a reputation as some of Europe's most dogged counterterrorism operators and was immune to terrorist attack within a decade, but was attacked violently on Thursday when a van shook Las Ramblas, Barcelona's famous pedestrian boulevard.

Political pundits believe that despite the fact that the ISIL group is losing ground in Iraq, it will seek safe haven in other parts of the world, including Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Currently, Tal Afar, a northern part of Iraq, is most likely to be the last pockets of ISIL-held territory in Iraq, after victory was declared in Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city. A US-led coalition is reportedly providing air support to the Iraqi troops. In recent days, it has been carrying out dozens of air strikes on Tal Afar, targeting weapons depots and command centers.

But to slow down the battle, the ISIL will target combatants and non-combatants indiscriminately and "use improvised bombs and use civilians as hostages".

The ISIL's fundamental ideology lets it violate the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and engage in war crime. Therefore, a large number of innocent civilians were killed in cold blood and their rights and dignity were violated in the worst possible way.

There is no doubt that the Iraqi forces will win in Tal Afar, but it will not reduce the threat of terrorism. For instance, Retired US General Mark Kimmitt said that while retaking Tal Afar would be an "important milestone", it would not mean final days for ISIL.

Little wonder, ISIL seeks to extend its terrorist activities around the world, mainly Afghanistan. Within the last two years, insurgency mounted in Afghanistan as some members of the Taliban and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) pledged allegiance to ISIL in the country. Increasing its attack substantially, the ISIL group stokes sectarian violence in Afghanistan through targeting Shiite ethnic minority. In its latest attack on a village in the northern province of Sar-e-Pul, described as a war crime by the Afghan president Muhammad Ashraf Ghani, government officials said ISIL joined forces with the Taliban in the brutal killing of more than 50 civilians.

Afghan nation believed earlier that the ideology of the Taliban and ISIL is in serious conflict which will remain a bone of contention between the two groups.

However, their joint attack on Sar-e-Pul proved the opposite. It was said that "there are no strict ideological distinctions between them so they build bridges when it helps them both". Indeed, the Taliban facilitated the ISIL to gain firm foothold in the country.

Similarly, the Taliban have intensified their attacks more than ever before. The same as ISIL, they target soldiers and civilians carrying out large-scale suicide bombings in public places. As a result of unmitigated insurgency, the graph of civilian casualties increased dramatically and the individuals' right to life is violated with impunity. In short, Afghan nation suffers severely in the wake of terrorism.

On the other hand, an effective counterinsurgency mechanism yet to be adopted. As the war on terror did not bear the desired result in Afghanistan, Donald Trump's administration seeks to adopt a counterterrorism strategy to win the war in Afghanistan. However, the discussion still continues over an effective strategy.

It is believed that warring factions will not hold negotiation - this fact has been proved as Afghan officials urged the Taliban outfit constantly to stop war and violence and come to negotiating table. With the infiltration of ISIL to the Taliban, the peace process is most likely to come to an unbreakable stalemate. Hence, military approach remains the only option to reduce militancy in the country.

The world must not downplay the seriousness of terrorism. Further delay for adopting an effective mechanism will provide further chance for warring parties to inflict more casualties upon one nation or another. It goes without saying that terrorism is the most challenging issue for the world.

It is the ripe time for all human societies to bury the differences and combat terrorism with all its roots and factors to protect the rights and freedoms of mankind and bring sustainable peace and stability for the entire nation. The world will have to make them stop spilling streams of blood every day in every nook and cranny. The flagrant violation of human rights by terrorist networks is highly outrageous and must come to an end as soon as possible.



Unemployment and its effect on Youths

By Mohammad Baqirian

Few days back, it was the International Youth Day. We observed much ado and indescribable delight of individuals and institutions in social media, speeches and ceremonies. People celebrated this day in one way or another. Celebrating such days are believed to be positive, however, if this is pondered upon a bit more deeply, we will come to know that there are too serious challenges, before the youths, to be put into words and they are wrestling with insurmountable problems. These celebrations are more likely to be ephemeral.

Our youths are in the grip of backbreaking problems. Unemployment is one of the most difficult issues that has gone beyond the tolerance of Afghan youths, who seek to graduate from university with the aim of getting job to make their ends meet and as well as serve the nation. With the current situation, their dreams hardly ever come true. A large number of students are unemployed in the wake of being graduated and making tireless efforts in this regard. Some of the youths struggle from one to three years living no stone unturned to get a job, but their struggles are proved abortive. Administrative corruption (nepotism, bribery, lack of transparency in employment process and test taking) is death knell of their hope. The said issues prevail to the extent that provide no chance for the growth of youths' talents. Therefore, scores of expert individuals who lack middleman remain jobless.

Brain-drain and flying the nest are the result of being given cold shoulder in the country. They are ignored for long time, their rights are violated and their abilities and capabilities are disregarded. That is to say, administrative corruption is the main reason behind the brain-drain. In addition, the voice of Afghan youths fall on deaf ears. Hence, flying the nest is believed to be the last resort for Afghan youths that hope to find job and make their dreams come true in other lands. Unluckily, countless number of the same youths encounter many crises in foreign countries, too. For example, they are being riddled with bullets in Syria's war, being preyed on whales in Australian ocean, and being exhausted in refugee camps in Europe. They leave their homes and families not with the intention of having fun but to survive life-threatening issues and have bread and butter. In brief, having no option other than emigration, Afghan youths choose the last resort at the cost of their destiny and life. They wish they could be freed from the confusion and ambiguity.

Being failed to obtain their goals after long struggles, a number of youths feel disappointed. In other words, inequality

and lack of meritocracy leave no incentive for them to work or continue their effort. The prevailing discrimination reduces their motivation and struggle in this respect. Perhaps, some of them will show inclination to perilous issues that will lead the society and their own life to a horrible consequence. When a criminal ground is paved for the youths, it will be an irreparable loss for the community. Recently, a report released by BBC about education in Maidan Wardak province of Afghanistan in which one of the interviewee said that sixty per cent of Maidan Wardak students are the Taliban soldiers.

Taliban provide them with motorcycles, their trip expanses and exploit them for war and other militancy in return. None of those youths joined the Taliban under duress, but by being provided with welfare. There are many examples of such kind. Hence, one will conclude that taking refuge to other countries, being preyed on by whales, riddled with bullets, and joining destructive and militant groups are the result of unemployment. To free the youths from this issue, providing job is likely to be the only option.

Job is the first and foremost need for Afghan youths. Job will provide them income. For instance, when the youths have income, they will have no serious issue to worry about and will take active part in developing the society. It goes without saying that if youths use their power and energy in different fields of life and in developing the society, it will be highly effective for the betterment of our community and catalyze our progress. Virtually, job will constitute hope for youths and hope will breed great prosperity. Hence, to support the youths and put an end to their confusion and ambiguous destiny, the hope of Afghan youths will have to be revived and there should be enough incentive for them to play their role in the society. Needless to say, the key of Afghanistan's development is in the powerful hands of our youths. They are able to play crucial role in the society and drive our country towards peace and stability through taking part in social, political and economic activities.

To sum up, it should be noted that giving a share to all youths in the government's body is not possible. Engaging in private sectors will be very beneficial for Afghan youths. Thousands of youths will be employed with the activities of private sectors. It is hoped that the ground will be paved for the youths' activities so that they could get rid of this unpleasant situation.

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The Wrong Way to Prevent Nuclear War

By Carl Bildt

A vast majority of countries want to eliminate the existential threat of nuclear catastrophe, and rightly so. But achieving a world free of nuclear weapons is easier said than done, and there is a risk that some attempts to do so could prove self-defeating.

Since the end of the Cold War, nuclear stockpiles around the world have been significantly reduced. Russia and the United States have each shrunk their nuclear arsenals by 80%, and during Barack Obama's presidency, the US urged Russia to pursue further reductions. In Western Europe, the United Kingdom and France have both made their already small arsenals even smaller. These countries had various reasons for reducing their stockpiles. But, as signatories to the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) - the foundation of global efforts to reduce the threat posed by nuclear weapons - they also had an obligation to do so. In recent years, progress toward nuclear disarmament has stalled. Russia is currently modernizing its strategic nuclear forces, and has started to mention its nuclear capacity more often in public statements. That explains why efforts to reduce nuclear arsenals in Western Europe have come to a halt. The US, for its part, is also reviewing its options for modernizing its nuclear arsenal.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has continued to produce the fissile materials used in nuclear weapons. Efforts to make the Middle East a nuclear-free zone have gone nowhere, largely because of Israel. The international community could not agree on a way forward at NPT review conferences in 2005 and 2015. And, of course, North Korea's nuclear ambitions have created another nuclear crisis in East Asia.

Against this backdrop, a large bloc of countries has proposed a far-reaching Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a draft of which was endorsed by 122 United Nations member states in early July. Unfortunately, what started as a worthwhile humanitarian effort has culminated in a severely flawed proposal. Three issues stand out. First, since no nuclear states support a nuclear-ban treaty, the current proposal, by itself, would not rid the world of a single nuclear warhead. Worse, the new treaty could undermine the NPT, which, despite its own flaws, has far wider backing, including that of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US). Finally, by treating the concept of extended nuclear deterrence as illegal, or at least immoral, the draft treaty could actually threaten security in Europe and East Asia. The initial draft treaty, when it was unveiled earlier this year, did not include language explicitly banning the use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent. But the version that countries voted on in July did. This is a critical change. The threat of a nuclear counterstrike is what keeps countries from using nuclear weapons in the first place. And so-called extended deterrence through alliances is what protects non-nuclear states from being blackmailed by nuclear states. Without extended deterrence, non-nuclear countries could see fit to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. It is for this reason that the Netherlands, the only

NATO country to participate in developing the nuclear-ban treaty, ultimately voted against it. Japan, the only country that has ever been attacked with nuclear weapons, has also withheld support for the treaty, because it relies on extended nuclear deterrence from the US.

Without such protection, Japan would be completely vulnerable to Chinese nuclear blackmail and North Korean missile attacks. Indeed, since diplomacy and deep sanctions have not put an end to North Korea's nuclear program, nuclear deterrence stands as the only practical way to protect East Asian countries from nuclear blackmail or attack. Likewise, the vast majority of European countries - from Finland to Portugal - have no wish to reside in the shadow of Russian nuclear warheads with nothing to protect them.

By effectively banning deterrence, the draft treaty could make the world even less safe than it already is. Of course, proponents of the treaty argue that it would build up public support for a nuclear-weapons ban over time, eventually forcing the governments of nuclear states to give up their arsenals.

But this is pure naiveté. No one with any connection to reality could seriously believe that the governments of China, Israel, Pakistan, and Russia will simply abandon their nuclear weapons because public opinion has turned against them.

Unfortunately, nuclear weapons are broadly popular in these countries, because they are seen as a security guarantor and a realization of national ambitions on the world stage. Those of us who want a nuclear-free world do not have to agree with this outlook; but we had better not ignore it.

A more realistic approach would be to pursue further nuclear-weapons reductions in both the US and Russia, where serious risks still need to be addressed. To that end, it is vital that neither country modernizes its nuclear arsenal in a way that is seen as expanding its nuclear capabilities. Instead, they must pave the way for further reductions.

In the Middle East, ending current conflicts and developing conflict-resolution mechanisms could help drive progress toward nuclear-free status over time. In this regard, the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, plus Germany) is an important first step. As for South Asia, one hopes that a détente between India and Pakistan will facilitate better nuclear-arms control, even if the shadow of China - which sees its bomb as part of its place in the world - will still hang over India.

In the end, full-scale nuclear disarmament probably cannot be achieved with a single Big Bang. The world would be better served by an incremental approach based on the NPT, strategic arms reductions by the major powers, and conflict resolution in key regions. In the best-case scenario, the proposed nuclear-ban treaty will be just a sideshow. But there is reason to fear that it will complicate ongoing efforts to reduce nuclear arsenals further, deepen the divide between nuclear- and non-nuclear states, and, in the worst-case scenario, even increase the risk of a nuclear conflict in key regions. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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