

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



August 22, 2016

## National Unity - A Crying Need

Lack of tolerance will undermine national unity in any society. Racial, ethnic and religious differences have split nations and triggered war and violence in human societies throughout the history. Bloody wars, including the World Wars, and civil unrests have outraged human conscience root in ethnocentrism, egotism and lack of tolerance. Parochial mindsets and radical ideology breed intolerance and put the rights and liberty of a nation at stake.

The escalated militancy and terrorism, which blackmail the entire world, stem from dogmatic ideology and religious intolerance. Persisting in their exclusive school of thought, religious ideologues exercise no tolerance toward others and trample upon one's rights and dignity flagrantly. Presently, the establishment of the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Taliban, Boko Haram, etc. that resort to violence and bloodshed are the product of dogmatic beliefs. Whenever accidental backgrounds are the bone of contention in a society, that nation will split.

In democratic societies, there live multi-ethnic nations with peace and harmony. People of different backgrounds treat one another with respect and dignity and seek to practice upon the golden rule of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". There are common ground for a nation to nurture the spirit of brotherhood: (1) Culture, which is a set of arts, beliefs, values, customs and behaviors rule the individual and collective relations of a society and handed down from one generation to the next. Cultural values root in a nation's beliefs, religion, history and language of a society which make distinction between a particular society and any other community. Similarly, cultural values rule the hearts and minds of a nation and embedded deeply in their conscience, feelings and emotions. (2) Equality on the basis of being human or citizen of a country without discrimination. It is stated in article 7 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination." Moreover, article 22 of Afghanistan's Constitution declares, "Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law." (3) Tolerating a multi-ethnic/poly-ethnic nation with all their differences. In other words, national unity is obtained through cultural and social setups based on ethnic pluralism. Currently, people of different ethnicities live in a country and they have to tolerate one another as they are. However, if they claim superiority or discriminate against an ethnic minority, that nation will splinter and the discriminated group will resort to violence so as to defend its rights.

"Nation" has evolved within a long historical period based on common territory, economy, history and culture. Culture, which results in common sentiments and feelings for unity, is the mainstay of forming a nation. The common ground such as history, religion, economic interests, etc. among the people residing a particular territory is the main factor in nation-making process.

In a pluralistic society, where multi-ethnic groups live with multi-languages, neither the majority nor the minority are supposed to impose their culture or beliefs on each other. If an ethnic minority group suffers on the basis of its race, color or language, or be sacrificed for the interests of the majority, peace and unity will be replaced by violence and instability. Both groups should accept each other as they are and exercise tolerance about the differences if they want to strengthen their national unity.

Afghanistan is also a country with multi-ethnic groups and there is common ground for national unity such as religion, Islamic culture, nationality, etc. Constitutionally, the differences and varieties are accepted without discrimination and all Afghan citizens have equal rights and duties before the law. Distinction and discrimination on the grounds of caste, creed and color, social or political status has no legal or religious basis. Since all Afghans form a single nation, regardless of their accidental backgrounds, they will have to nurture the spirit of brotherhood and live with peace. Rather than differences, they are to focus on national commonalities and shared interests. Moreover, Afghan authorities, besides standing united, should underline national unity and inspire the sense of brotherhood among the nation.

Currently, Afghanistan needs national unanimity more than ever before. It is believed that there are many hands working behind the scenes to stoke sectarianism and split the nation. Why the militant groups seek to channel public attention to the differences? It is not an impromptu incident but a pre-planned and systematic decision that has been mapped out by masterminds and the militants are the vehicle for carrying out their plans. Perhaps, there are also some who muddy the water through touching sore points or spreading propaganda in cyberspace just to create a national gap. Afghan nation should be on the alert for this issue and uphold national unity in the best possible way so as to live in peace and harmony.

# 10 Extraordinary Things I Like About Afghanistan

By Najeeb Azad

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook Afghanistan  
Continued from Yesterday

### 6- Rise of gender equality

Though based on a 2011 survey by Thoms Reuters Foundation, Afghanistan was identified as the most dangerous places for women due to high mortality rates, limited access to doctors and lack of economic rights. There have been major achievements in the path of gender equality, comparing the conditions to the Taliban's era in the country. During the black era of Taliban regime, women were not allowed to work outside the home, were forced to wear burqa, and were not allowed to travel unless they were accompanied by a man and fully covered.

"The citizens of Afghanistan - whether man or woman - have equal rights and duties before the law"

Things have changed significantly during the post-Taliban period. Surveys by the Asia Foundation show that Afghan women from different social classes believe that they are experiencing slow but steady improvements in their life, and that 82% of men support principles of equality regardless of gender, ethnicity and religion. Major advocacy on gender equality has been included in the national legislations. The Afghan constitution, established in 2004, notes gender equality in Article 22, which states: "Any kind of discrimination and privilege between the citizens of Afghanistan are prohibited. The citizens of Afghanistan - whether man or woman - have equal rights and duties before the law."

To build on gender equality, Afghan government has established Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA), Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), and many other long-term national programmes including the National Action Plan for Women (NAPWA). Surveys by Oxfam show that girls comprise 38% of Afghanistan's student population, there are around 3 million girls going to school in Afghanistan, and that 36% of teachers hired since 2002 have been female.

According to the PIRS report, Afghanistan grants 25% of seats to women in its lower house of parliament, the Wolesi Jirga, and 17% of seat to women in the upper house, the Meshrano Jirga. These quotas are specified in Articles 83 and 84 of the Afghan constitution.

### 7- Simple lifestyle

Afghans live their life in the simplest way. An Afghan family lives within a house together collectively. Simplicity in life of Afghans start from living collectively and continues to: a) their simple sitting style - cross-legged sitting on the floor rather than the fancy chairs; b) their sleeping style on a mattress on the floor rather than luxury beds.

Appreciating the simple Afghan lifestyle, it would have been great that their daily lives were free of huge national tensions which mentally affect them. As an Afghan, the living environment within a house which depends on the family is fair mostly; but when you are out of the house, things change. Outside your house, people are poor - they beg, they live on the road-sides, they are narcotic addicts, they are hopeless about the country's now and future, they leave the country in search of a peaceful place to live, they are jobless, they are being killed by insurgents, etc.

"Afghans live simply with happy faces, but loads of national sorrow inside their radiant heart."

Living in such a society, every human-being with a sense/feeling will be af-

fect. Huge national tensions rise throughout the country due to the terrible situation throughout the country. In other sense Afghans are happy in their face, but with loads of national sorrow inside their radiant heart. I like the simple lifestyle of Afghans, until they have the resources to change it better, but the first priority before changing the lifestyle should be removing the national tensions from the life of every Afghan which needs a lot of time, effort and resources to happen.

### 8- Children going to school

The long-running conflict in the country has affected Afghan children significantly. In 2001, there were no girls formally attending schools in Afghanistan, and only one million boys going to school.

"7.8 million children enrolled in schools"

According to the World Bank, a total of 7.8 million children enrolled in schools as of 2012, including 2.9 million girls. Though there are many challenges faced by the Afghan children, considering the UNICEF surveys that show approximately one quarter of children ages seven to 14 were working in 2007.

With around 8 million national hopes enrolled in schools, the future appears bright and prosperous. The new generations of hardworking intellectual Afghans, having pen in hand and wisdom within, can truly change the country's direction towards development and self-sufficiency.

### 9- Nan

Afghans are addict of nans; get everything out of their meal but do not get the nan. Afghans even eat nan with nan when our desire for nan is heightened. Our nan with nan meal is called Shorba where pieces of shortened nan is soaked in the cooked meat's water, and then eaten back with nan (optional).

For the sake of nans - which are highly harder than sliced bread (which is way softer than Afghanistan nans) Afghans sometime get toothache after eating soft sliced bread for more than a year overseas, and then eating the hard nans back in the country. So thanks to our hard nans that has grown strong teeth for Afghans. The strong Afghan teeth sometimes made/make our former president/proud Afghans recall that "Afghans are lions", yes we are lions only from the strong teeth perspective.

### 10- Fruits and mineral resources

More than 80% of Afghanistan's population depend on natural resources for living. Unfortunately due to security threats less investment has been done in the field of country's natural resources. Kandahar province has the most delicious pomegranate in the world, the country has the best dry fruit, and Bamyan has the best potatoes. The value of country's mineral resources were estimated to be around three trillion US Dollars.

"Three trillion US Dollars of natural resources"

Despite the quality pomegranate, potatoes, best dry fruits, and huge amount of mineral resources, the country witnesses extreme poverty, less/no economic growth, and rising unemployment. Though our so called president is a policy-making geek, I hope we had a policy-implementing geek president who could actually make things happen rather than talking about it. The policy-implementing geek president would have led to economic growth, employment opportunities, poverty eradication, and extinction of Afghanistan-based terrorism.

Stay tuned, coming up: 10+ things I (sort of) dislike about Afghanistan.

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## An OPEC for Migrant Labor?

By Sami Mahroum

In September 1960, delegates from Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela met in Baghdad to form the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. As the world's dependence on oil increased, so did OPEC's power. Today, with many developing countries, including a majority of the countries in the Middle East, serving as some of the world's main labor exporters, might it be time to consider the formation of an OPEC-like cartel for migrant workers?

OPEC succeeded in protecting its members' shared interests that they could not protect individually. When a market has structural distortions, political tools and collective action of the sort that OPEC embodied can be more effective than public policy.

Labor-exporting countries today are not so different from OPEC's founding members in 1960. They, too, are vulnerable in a market where their customers call the shots. Rich labor-importing countries and poor labor-exporting countries have a mutually dependent relationship; but labor importers can unilaterally tighten or loosen immigration or labor-market regulations, leaving exporters in a constant state of uncertainty.

This imbalance can have serious costs for labor exporters. Remittances by expatriate workers are an essential lifeline for many developing countries - more so than any other financial inflows, including foreign direct investment and aid - and often help to balance a country's books. Indeed, according to the World Bank, in 2013 remittances amounted to 20-24% of GDP in the Philippines and Indonesia, 42% in Tajikistan, 32% in Kyrgyzstan, 17% in Lebanon, 10.8% in Jordan, 9.9% in Yemen, and 6.6% in Egypt and Morocco.

For many developing countries, labor is a strategic production factor, just as commodities are for resource-rich economies. When we think about migrant labor, we think of low-skill work in agriculture, construction, services, and domestic work. But countries such as Jordan and Lebanon (among others) are now educating workers to compete as high-skilled expatriates, too.

Labor exporters now need to protect their investments in human capital, and a cartel-like political body is the most effective way to do this. If the countries listed above were to join with China, Mexico, India, and other major labor exporters, they would be holding most of the chips in a collective negotiation about wages, visa terms, and other conditions - some of which would also benefit non-members as global norms changed. Labor importers would have to vie for access to a collective market, rather than individual national markets, and countries that gained access would have a significant comparative advantage over those that did not.

A cartel would prevent labor-exporting countries from cannibalizing their own interests, as currently happens with bilateral arrangements. For example, if they were to conclude separate agreements with Gulf Cooperation

Council countries, individual Southeast Asian countries would undercut one another, with the result that they might end up with worse deals.

With a cartel, governments would instead set minimum-wage rates for different professions and trades, as well as for different skill levels. As exporters trained their migrant workforces, demand for their labor would grow and spark competition among venders rather than suppliers, thus fueling a virtuous cycle of higher wages and even more skills training. And, because this would all happen on global markets, the prices of certain skills would become more transparent to training institutions, students, employees, and employers alike.

In this new system, importing countries would collect taxes - on the basis of the newly set minimum wage - and remittances would remain untaxed. In this sense, the cartel would double as an international workers' union, lending bargaining power to employees in countries where unions are weak or not permitted at all.

A labor-exporting cartel would have far-reaching effects on the current system. Cartel members would be empowered to reward and penalize third parties acting in bad faith. And, most important, the workers themselves would be empowered to reclaim their dignity in a system that has long stripped them of it. Indeed, we could expect xenophobia to wane worldwide as access to foreign workers became more privileged.

A cartel could advance the cause of comprehensive immigration and expat labor reform in many countries, including the United States, Japan, and the Gulf states. Under a newly negotiated arrangement, labor-exporting countries would likely have an incentive to curb free riders and illegal emigration, and labor-importing countries would likely have an incentive to legalize and manage the status of illegal immigrants already within their borders.

One likely objection to this proposal is that low-skilled labor will cost more, which could accelerate automation. But the jobs automation displaced from the production sector would simply move to the leisure sector, because demand for domestic workers, waiters, gardeners, and the like would increase. Because a cartel would make these market changes more discernible, labor exporters would be able to respond and adjust their worker-training systems accordingly, increasing labor importers' ability to recruit migrant workers better suited to the available jobs.

All told, a labor-exporting cartel would bring order to an industry that has long been mired in controversy, damaging the reputations of more than a few labor-importing countries. It would change the dynamics of labor supply and demand to the benefit of both workers - who would have new protections - and importing countries, which would have access to trained laborers to respond to rapid changes - often driven by technology - in economic conditions. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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