

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



December 01, 2015

Resuming Peace Talk is the Limelight

Resuming peace negotiation between Afghanistan and Taliban is back in the media spotlight after being disrupted with news of Mullah Omar's death two years earlier was leaked just days before Islamabad was set to host the second round of reconciliation dialogue. In a recent visit to the United States, Pakistan's Army Chief General Raheel Sharif emphasized on the issue.

"It would have been imprudent to set the timeframe without getting the Afghan government and China on board," a source said. China, it should be recalled, has been playing a proactive role in Afghanistan and participated in the first round of talks on July 7 as an observer along with the US.

However, the source said it was expected that a "lot of ground would be covered during the Heart of Asia Conference", which Pakistan is co-hosting with Afghanistan on December 7-8. It is speculated that President Ashraf Ghani would visit Islamabad on this occasion.

Chinese Special Envoy on Afghanistan Ambassador Deng Xijun, who visited Pakistan last week, also offered to facilitate the Afghan dialogue, provided other stakeholders agreed to the proposal. A concerted diplomatic push for resumption of the reconciliation process is clearly afoot.

A delegation of Pakistani Pashtun political leaders met President Ghani on Thursday at the presidential palace in Kabul and persuaded him to meet Pakistani Prime Minister in an attempt to put the acrimonious relationship between the two countries back on track.

The delegation comprised of Asfandyar Wali, Mehmood Khan Achakzai and Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao. Former Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa governor Shaukatullah Khan and former ambassador Ayaz Wazir are also accompanying them.

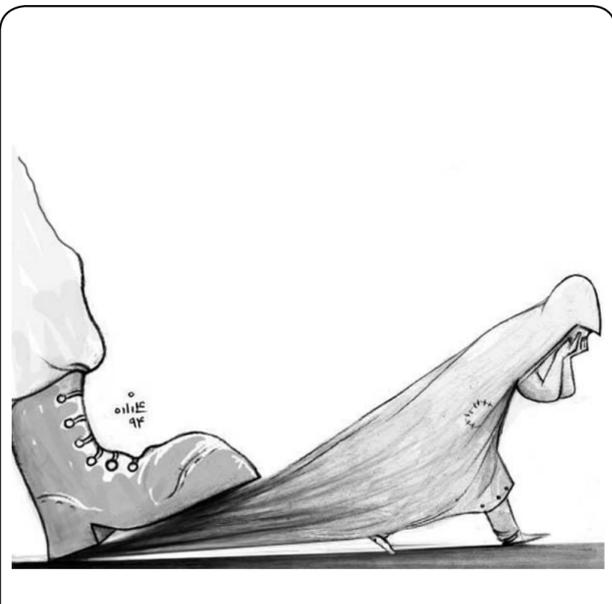
Bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan came under strain because of the suspension of the peace dialogue and the accompanying increase in violence. Since, according to Afghan officials, a number of terrorist networks are active in Pakistan; it was believed that militants cross the Afghan-Pak porous border. Moreover, members of Taliban were cured in Pakistan hospitals in the wake of being wounded in battles. Therefore, Afghan officials blamed Pakistan in escalated insurgency in the country and urged Pakistani officials not to treat the Taliban's wounded fighters and prevent from their open sessions.

Political instability is a matter of great concern for Afghan nation and a major challenge before the National Unity Government (NUG). In spite of the establishment of High Peace Council (HPC) and the state's tireless efforts to cease militancy in Afghanistan, the Taliban insurgents have mounted their offensive in the country. Similarly, the "war on terror" did not give the desired result and NATO soldiers withdrew from the country except a few numbers who have reduced their role to training and giving advice to Afghan soldiers. Currently, up to 13,000 NATO soldiers serve in Afghanistan of which 9,800 of them are US troops. It is expected that up to 8,000 US troops will continue their mission in Afghanistan beyond 2016.

US Army Brig. Gen. Wilson Shoffner from Resolute Support said that the coalition was considering a broad review of the planning process as well as the targeting process at all levels of the command chain. NATO has further asserted that the alliance will take new initiatives to protect civilians during engagements, adding that the alliance's advisory role and technical support will continue to be given to Afghan troops until sustainable peace and stability is restored in the country. Irony aside, Pakistani officials persist on resuming peace talk and promise to nudge the Taliban to sit on the table of negotiation - Pakistani Chief of Army Staff, General Raheel Sharif, discussed the issue with his American interlocutors on a trip recently. According to them, reconciliation process is the only way that can bring peace in the country. Perhaps, Pakistan wants to regain the trust of Afghan officials and normalize the strained relation through playing a mediatory role. The Chinese special envoy for Afghanistan Deng Xijun also said this month that Beijing wanted Pakistan and Afghanistan to sit down and remove bilateral differences through talks. Deng met the Pakistani and Afghan leaders during his first visit to both the countries.

According to a report, recently, there was a proposal from British Prime Minister David Cameron that Nawaz and Ghani meet in Paris, however, the latter did not agree. "Consequently, Pakistan has sent the Pashtun leaders to Kabul to persuade Ghani [for the meeting]," according to the report.

However, the question remains that how much the Taliban elements are subject to Pakistani officials? Since the Taliban are at war with Pakistan too and sporadic clashes go on between them, will they give the green light to Pakistan's proposal to lay their arms down and resolve the challenges in a diplomatic way?



Widening Gap between Generations

By Dilawar Sherzai

It is the nature of nature that it changes and evolves. From the very tiny things to the most gigantic ones, all go through a process of change. In some of the things these changes are quite speedy and can be observed evidently, while in others they are slow and cannot be observed clearly. Same is the case with the human beings. They keep on changing from their birth till their death. A human is born a baby while he dies an old man; while throughout this journey he goes through different phases. This change is very natural and there is no possibility to stop this change. However, the change mentioned above is just physical while psychologically as well they go through various alterations. Their way of thinking, their outlook and their tastes keep on varying with the increasing age.

In order to observe the changes within human beings, it would be better to observe the changes within two consecutive generations. A new generation differs from an older one in so many ways. Attitude, behavior, outlook, habits and considerations all of these differ. It is debatable whether a new generation is better from an older one or not but it is not arguable that it is dissimilar. So as to understand this concept a simple analysis of distinctions between us and our forefathers can be carried out. Our forefathers were not mostly educated but today a large number of our youngsters are educated. They think differently, eat differently and even dress differently.

Moreover, it can be observed that the changes that take place in human societies have become very frequent and speedy. The daily growth in different fields of knowledge and education has revolutionized human societies and cultures. Add to this growth the advancement in technology and persistent addition in the list of different inventions. In short, both the material culture and non-material culture seem in a hurry to make advancements.

Though these disparities among two consecutive generations are natural, the question is, "Are they positive?" and "Can such changes be considered advancement?" This is the demand of evolution that there must be changes, but it is not necessary that they are always positive. Sometimes the changes are very much healthy for the society and can have positive influence but at some other times they may bring harm to society in some way or the other. Nonetheless, the nature of these changes should be analyzed as per their capacity to fulfill the challenges of the era and their capacity to solve the problems prevailing around, not to multiply them.

A notable issue that rises with the disparities between the two generations is "Generation Gap". Generation gap, as hinted above, means the differences between two consecutive generations. Though generation gap within itself is not an issue but it becomes one when it starts creating misunderstandings between parents and children. Sometimes they become so strong that they result in the disintegration of families and

a series of emotional sufferings. Parents, who nourish their children for years, at some point of life become strangers for their children and sometimes children consider their parents as their enemies instead of guardians and caretakers. Therefore, in such cases, the gap keeps on widening and the parents and children keep on moving away from each other.

The important thing at such a point is to understand the basic theory of life and that is, "things change". Everybody needs to understand this basic philosophy of life. Though it seems very simple to understand, it is the most difficult to adjust to. People agree and accept this phenomenon theoretically but practically they never adopt it and that is where the problem arises. Parents need to understand that their children and their way of thinking and behaving will definitely be different. That is bound to happen. Children cannot be similar to their parents. Unfortunately, most of the parents want that their children to be their carbon copy. They abhor the differences in them and keep on giving their own examples and the examples of their own times and in most of the cases these examples are obsolete and they are no more applicable in a different society. When the children do not do what the parents expect, which are basically unnatural the parents are frustrated and gap starts getting wider.

It is not necessary that all the changes that are there in generation should be accepted by the parents as some of them may be very much awkward and even alien. With the penetration of globalization in the different cultures, it is not difficult to find many aspects of the life in the new generation quite unfit for their society.

Such aspects should be dealt with mastery. It is not to say that all the parents should be sociologists but they can be wise and for wisdom there is no need of great deal of education but experience is what counts the most.

Children, when become young, are full of energy and they are easily influenced by the changes as they are in their learning process and more open to the social changes. They, in certain cases, get carried away by the tides of changes and when they become conscious they find themselves nowhere. Then the time to mend has already passed and they have no way to return; therefore, the parents need to understand them and help them get to a better destination. Parents cannot stop changes; all they can do is to guide the changes properly and channel them towards positivity.

Two consecutive generations may always differ from each other in attitude, behavior and thinking but they can always have emotional attachment and can have a sense of respect for one another. There can be affection between them, but for emotions and affection to tie them tightly it is necessary that they have to rise above the differences in cloths, thinking and tastes. They have to raise their humanity a level higher and start perceiving each other on the basis of their beings not the different manifestations of their beings.

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The Long March to Paris

By Rana Kapoor, Johan Rockström, Khalifa Ababacar Sall, and Feike Sijbesma

Over the next few weeks, Paris will once again dominate global headlines. This time, however, the news is likely to be positive, as world leaders come together to forge a meaningful agreement in the fight against climate change.

To be sure, at first glance, the United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place from November 30 to December 11 looks a lot like the 2009 conference in Copenhagen, when negotiators were unable to agree on an effective accord. And indeed, the desired outcome remains unchanged: an international deal that will reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and limit global warming to 2° Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

But there are notable differences this time around. The stiff economic headwinds that negotiators confronted six years ago have been replaced by a tailwind of opportunity. No longer is the conversation limited to burden sharing and sacrifice; increasingly, there is talk of innovation and technological breakthroughs that make sustainable development possible. In short, the negotiations are taking place in an environment favorable to collective action, with support from the business community, financial institutions, civil society, religious leaders, politicians, and, indeed, the public at large.

Furthermore, the agreement to be reached in Paris is being built from the bottom up. It is clear that whatever shape the agreement takes, it will not be totally top-down. So countries have been asked to propose what they think they can achieve in terms of reducing emissions after 2020, through so-called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). And while this solution may not yet be adequate to the challenge of heading off the consequences of climate change, it is a strong step forward.

Meanwhile, in the years since the Copenhagen summit, there has been a surge of concrete progress on the part of the "non-state actors" whose cooperation will be needed to implement an international agreement. An unprecedented number of scientists, business leaders, and subnational government politicians such as mayors and governors have made clear the need for a strong agreement in Paris. Broad support for a robust accord is reflected in the more than 10,000 commitments to combat climate change made by cities, regions, companies, and investors.

This emerging consensus was also reflected in May at the Business & Climate Summit and Climate Finance Day,

where investors and business leaders pledged to lead the global transition to a low-carbon economy. Participants at the two events called for setting a price on carbon, phasing out fossil-fuel subsidies, more partnerships with governments, and the coupling of public and private finance to diffuse the risks of low-carbon investments.

And in July, more than 2,000 researchers meeting in Paris at a conference called Our Common Future Under Climate Change concluded that ambitious efforts at mitigating carbon dioxide emissions would be economically feasible and have numerous knock-on benefits. This finding is fully in line with last year's New Climate Economy report, which established that it is possible to combat climate change while promoting economic growth.

Gradually, funding is being channeled toward regions in need of assistance in the fight against climate change. The OECD estimates that the flows of public and private climate finance reached \$62 billion in 2014. And, in October, the World Bank pledged to increase its direct and leveraged climate financing to up to \$29 billion annually.

Innovative financing is also becoming more important, especially in developing countries. In February, Yes Bank, India's fifth-largest private-sector bank, issued the first ever "Green Infrastructure Bond."

In August, the International Finance Corporation issued a five-year "green Masala bond" on the London Stock Exchange. Meanwhile, institutional investors have been snapping up a series of climate bonds focusing on water, affordable housing, smart cities, and an array of other mitigation and adaption projects.

Meanwhile, local-level politicians in cities and regions around the world are often well ahead of their national leaders. At the World Summit Climate & Territories in Lyon in July, 14 networks of subnational and local governments, representing 11% of the world's population, committed to emission reductions equivalent to 15% of the effort needed to keep global warming below 2° Celsius.

What all these efforts have in common is a desire to compel negotiators in Paris to recognize the urgency of the climate challenge. Their participants want world leaders to understand that progress is not only achievable; it is already occurring. A global climate agreement remains vitally important. But forging one would no longer be a leap of faith. It would be a leap into open arms. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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