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Social Isolation Must be Diminished

In today's world where society has evolved and the patterns of human interactions have become complicated, it is difficult to find people who would opt for a way of living that may negate the social interactions and relations. However, such behaviors exist and, in modern world, where direct social interactions are becoming less frequent and the family seems to be disintegrating, the issues of social isolation seems to be on rise.

Social isolation is often involuntary, where the people who suffer from social isolation are involved in it unconsciously. It basically gives rise to a behavior that is not motivated towards social gatherings and avoids or even shies away from them. Though people having social isolation have loneliness, it is not the same as loneliness, since loneliness can be for a short period of time; whereas, isolation can be for a longer period of time with a higher degree and intensity.

Social isolation is a matter of concern because it has the potential to give rise to many other social and psychological issues. The effects of isolation show themselves in different ways among different people. Some become so much frustrated that they may start activities that can harm them or even others. Criminal behavior and psychological problems are in many cases the result of social isolation. Therefore, it is a matter of concern for the society as a whole. There can be different reasons of isolation. Especially, in modern world of ours where human beings have been largely mechanized, the feelings of seclusion and loneliness are very much common. The convenient use of modern technology has made human beings distant from each other - this is what most of the sociologists and psychologists believe. However, there are some who argue otherwise. They believe that the use of internet and mobile phones actually bring human beings close together. With the advent of online social networking communities, there are increasing options to do social activities that do not require real-world physical interaction.

They believe that the social sites, chat rooms, message boards, and other types of communities are now meeting the need for those who would rather stay home but still manage social interaction through developing communities of online friends. But modern research suggests that the use of modern technology, for whatsoever purpose it is used, may make the users even more isolated or depressed.

Some of the other reasons of social isolation may include mental disabilities, living alone or grieving for the loss of a dear one. Some even suggest that these reasons may be the effects as well.

The effects of social isolation can be detrimental to a large extent. Continuous and recurring social isolation that may last for a long period of time can prove to be very much serious and may result into a chronic condition. The people suffering from such a condition have no one to turn to in personal emergencies, no one to divulge in during a crisis, and no one to measure their own behavior against or learn etiquette from - referred to sometimes as social control, but possibly best described as simply being able to see how other people behave and adapt oneself to that behavior.

Lack of consistent human contact can also cause conflict with the (peripheral) friends the socially-isolated person might occasionally talk to, or might cause interaction problems with family members. It may also give rise to uncomfortable thoughts and behaviors within the person, buoyed by the fact that there are no other humans around to tell the person whether those behaviors are "right or wrong".

A notion, widely expressed by the observers, is that social relationships beneficially affect health, not only because of their supportiveness, but also because of the social control that others exercise over a person, especially by encouraging health-promoting behaviors such as adequate sleep, diet, exercise, and compliance with medical regimens or by discouraging health-damaging behaviors such as smoking, excessive eating, alcohol consumption, or drug abuse. Another hypothesis is that social ties link people with diffuse social networks that facilitate access to a wide range of resources supportive of health, such as medical referral networks, access to others dealing with similar problems, or opportunities to acquire needed resources via jobs, shopping, or financial institutions. These effects are different from support in that they are less a function of the nature of immediate social ties but rather of the ties these immediate ties provide to other people. Also, social isolation can sometimes go hand in hand with mental illness because of behaviors mentioned beforehand.

Hence, it is one of the most important requirements of human beings that they frequent and sufficient opportunities to intermingle with their fellow human and have interactions and form relations. It is a crystal-clear fact that human beings cannot live without a society and social gathering and groups. Therefore, honest efforts must be carried out to diminish every form of social isolation as much as possible.



How to Bring the Taliban to Peace Table?

By Hujjatullah Zia

Peace negotiation between Afghan government and the Taliban has been a controversial issue. The rocky road of peace talks frequently came to a stalemate. No country has been able to break the deadlock and militancy continues unabated in Afghanistan since the Taliban intensified their attacks. Although countries are either unable or unwilling to broker the talks, they still deem negotiation only viable option for peace.

To view the stance of Afghan government, it has been calling warring faction, particularly the Taliban, to stop violence and hold negotiation. Afghan officials urge their Pakistani counterparts to play a genuine role in nudging the Taliban to peace table and support Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. On the other hand, a Pakistani high-ranking official Sartaj Aziz has said peace will not be possible without the support of Pakistan to the international community, insisting that Islamabad is committed to do all it can to help the Afghan reconciliation process. So, Afghan government believes in Pakistan's leverage over the Taliban and left no stone unturned in holding negotiation.

It goes without saying that Pakistan is able to play an essential role in terms of negotiation through putting pressure on the Taliban. During his meeting with the Pakistani officials, the US Secretary of Defense James Mattis emphasized the vital role that Pakistan can play in working with the United States and others to facilitate a peace process in Afghanistan that brings stability and security to the region.

Despite this fact, the Taliban hold out against the talks and continue their terrorist attacks against Afghan state and nation. Showing no tendency to hold talks, the Taliban refuse to come to negotiating table. Since the establishment of the National Unity Government (NUG), the Taliban have carried out large-scale attacks against Afghan soldiers and civilians. They never decided to attend peace meetings, which undermined the effect of regional and global conferences on peace negotiation.

The world also seeks to bring the Taliban to peace table. A large number of global officials believe that peace talks will be the only viable option to security. Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev said that political negotiations are the most reliable way to ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan. Ac-

ording to him, Uzbekistan would render comprehensive assistance in Afghanistan's integration into regional socio-economic processes.

In spite of the fact that peace negotiation is widely stressed, no country claims that it will be able to persuade warring factions to hold talks. In fact, if the Taliban are nudged to negotiating table, they will be welcomed by Afghan government and it is what Kabul has been seeking for years. Only stressing negotiation will not be a panacea but the world should also point out how Afghanistan can persuade the militant fighters to stop violence. Afghan government never closed the door for talks, however, this is the most tortuous way that the country has ever faced. Reclining on chair and saying simply that negotiation is the solution to peace will no more carry weight. It is time to outline how Afghanistan can persuade the merciless fighters and their radical leaders to stop killing innocent civilians. To render support to Afghanistan in combating terrorism, there are three options for its allies and neighbors to consider. First, those countries which deem peace talks the only viable option for security should also suggest the way to bring the Taliban to negotiating table. Afghanistan showed strong flexibility to the Taliban and has recently announced that the Taliban can open its office for talks anywhere, including Kabul. But the frequent calls for peace fall on the Taliban's deaf ears. Now the question is that is holding talks with such a group possible?

Second, those countries must be able to break the deadlock or facilitate the talks between the Taliban and Afghan government. It should be noted that Afghan government has spent the most of its energy in this case and the High Peace Council (HPC) is doing its best to hold a face-to-face negotiation with the Taliban; but all the struggles were proved abortive. So, there is a need for third party to facilitate the talks.

The third option is that those states must join forces with Afghan government to deal with the Taliban militarily so as to reduce violence and bloodshed. Resolving the issue through diplomatic way is possible with a political party rather than a militant or an ideological faction. The Taliban are a militant party seeking to foment trouble and shed the blood of soldiers and civilians under the sacred term of jihad. They will not succumb to call for peace. In brief, first the Taliban are not willing to stop violence. Second, stressing to hold talks without out-

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Does Europe Really Need Fiscal and Political Union?

There is a growing sense in Europe, among conservatives and progressives alike, that fiscal and eventual political union is necessary to maintain the euro without damaging economic performance or democratic values. But there is also an alternative, much less ambitious view, according to which only banking union is needed.

By Dani Rodrik

Greece's combative former finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, and his nemesis, former German finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble, were at loggerheads on Greek debt throughout Varoufakis's term in office. But they were in full agreement when it came to the central question of the eurozone's future. Monetary union required political union. No middle way was possible.

This is one of the interesting revelations in Varoufakis's fascinating account of his tenure as finance minister. "You are probably the one [in the Eurogroup] who understands that the eurozone is unsustainable," Varoufakis quotes Schäuble as telling him. "The eurozone is constructed wrongly. We should have a political union, there is no doubt about it."

Of course, Schäuble and Varoufakis had different ideas regarding the ends that political union would serve. Schäuble saw political union as a means to impose strong fiscal discipline on member states from the center, tying their hands and preventing "irresponsible" economic policies. Varoufakis thought political union would relax creditors' stranglehold on his economy and create room for progressive politics across Europe.

Nevertheless, it is remarkable that these two officials from opposite ends of the political spectrum arrived at an identical diagnosis about the euro. The convergence is indicative of the growing sense of the need for fiscal and eventual political union if the euro is to be maintained without damage to economic performance or democratic values. French President Emmanuel Macron has advanced similar ideas. And the leader of Germany's Social Democrats, Martin Schulz, has also thrown his weight behind a "United States of Europe" in recent days.

But there is also an alternative, much less ambitious view, according to which neither fiscal nor political union is needed. What needs to be done instead is to de-link private finance from public finance, insulating each from the malfeasance of the other.

With this separation, private finance can be fully integrated at the European level, while public finance is left to individual member states. This way, countries can reap the full benefit of financial integration while national political authorities are left free to manage their own economies. Brussels would no longer be the bogeyman, insisting on fiscal austerity and drawing the ire of countries with high unemployment and low growth.

Martin Sandbu of the Financial Times has been a strong proponent of the view that a workable monetary and financial union does not require fiscal integration. He believes the critical reform is to prevent bank bailouts by public authorities. The price of bank failures should be paid by the banks' owners and creditors; we should have bail-ins rather than bailouts.

Sandbu argues that this would not only insulate public finance from the follies of banks; it would also lead to an equilibrium that mimics fiscal risk-sharing between countries that are net borrowers and countries that are net lenders. When banks in the former fail, it is creditors in the latter that would bear the

cost. "With banking union, there is no need for fiscal union," he argues.

In a forthcoming book, the University of California, Berkeley, economist Barry Eichengreen also makes the case for re-nationalizing fiscal policy, which he views as essential to stemming the tide of European populism. Eichengreen thinks returning fiscal policy to national authorities would require preventing banks from holding too much government debt, in order to minimize the risk that national fiscal mismanagement topples the banking system. Governments that go bust would have to restructure their debts rather than get bailouts from other EU states.

Advocates of cutting the Gordian knot between private and public finance recognize that governments' approach to banks must change radically if this separation is to work. But it is not clear that their proposed remedies would work. As long as economic policy remains the province of national governments, sovereign risk will likely continue to distort the operation of cross-border finance. Sovereign states can always change the rules ex post, which means full financial integration is impossible. And the costs of local financial shocks cannot be diversified away as easily.

Consider what happens when a large bank goes bankrupt in the US - an economic union where the Sandbu and Eichengreen rules already apply. The regional economic spillovers are limited by the fact that other borrowers can continue to function normally: creditworthiness is determined by a borrower's fundamentals and not its state of residence. No one expects a state government to interfere in inter-state payments, rewrite bankruptcy rules, or issue its own currency in case of extreme distress.

State governments in the US exercise little sovereignty in large part because they have less need of it: their residents receive transfers from the center and send their representatives to Washington, DC, to help make federal policy.

But EU member states are in a very different position vis-à-vis the EU institutions in Brussels. Because they retain sovereignty, they cannot make similarly credible commitments not to interfere with financial markets. So the risk remains that a severe enough financial shock in the EU will affect all other borrowers in the same country in a self-fulfilling manner. Pretending that we can separate private from public finance may exacerbate, rather than moderate, financial boom-and-bust cycles.

In contemporary societies, finance must serve a public purpose beyond the logic of financial market profitability. So it is irrevocably politicized - for good as well as bad reasons. It appears that conservative and progressive policymakers alike are re-

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