

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



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Responsibilities are as Important as Rights

There is a very close relationship between a person's rights and his responsibilities. Rights are privileges while the responsibilities are duties; therefore, most of the people are inclined towards the attitude of shouting for their rights all the times but do not have an inclination towards identifying their responsibilities as well and feel liable to perform them.

There are only few cases wherein people can be found to be responsible without insistence from the society or the socio-political conditions. In many cases, there are strict rules and regulations and norms and values that play the role of memorizing the people about their responsibilities.

Nevertheless, in order to have a balanced society, it is important that the individuals must also identify and realize their responsibilities when they demand their rights.

A society can never be run, if it has only to fulfill the rights of people. In fact, the rights of some people in many cases are ensured when other people perform their responsibilities. Therefore, it is a both way process. Both need to be carried out simultaneously to ensure balance within the society.

Active members of the society who are the real agents of change and development are basically the ones who recognize their responsibilities along with their rights and also have the courage to perform them. An analysis of the socio-political conditions of the developed countries would show that their people are far more responsible and that is the reason of their development and progress. However, the people in our society are very much lethargic and even incognizant regarding their responsibilities. Since there were many aid agencies and support that are provided to the people that are mostly directed towards helping the people of their short-term troubles instead of providing them the means of earning for themselves, the situation has gotten worse.

Now, every individual believes that he deserves that aid money or support in some way or the other without having to perform his duties. This concept of seeking for others' help every time has made our people shun their responsibilities.

Nobody feels that it the responsibility of the Afghan people as a whole to rise to the occasion and extract themselves out of the troubles by depending on their own strengths and potentials.

Every person in the hierarchy of the society tries to avoid responsibility and when there are problems and issues as a result, he separates himself from them and put the blame on others. This is particularly the case with the politicians within our society. Being posted on important positions, they should feel more responsibility and must ensure that they lead others as example. Since, there is a saying that with great power comes great responsibility. But, such a notion is not part of our society at all.

The ruling elite is not responsible to anyone, not even to the law. What they are practicing nowadays regarding the prevailing insecurity and many other social problems is nothing except blame game. In fact, the major problem in this regard lies within the institutional nourishment. In our society the children are not nourished with a sense of true responsibility. As they grow up, they do not seem to realize what their responsibilities are towards their fellow human beings and towards their society.

Mostly, they are taught to fulfill certain responsibilities which are limited to their individual lives. Same is the case within the educational institutions. Currently, in most of the educational institutions there is a race for degree and a blind competitions to secure better marks so that the students should be able to find a lucrative job and settle somewhere secure and peaceful.

Through such nourishment, the individuals fail to connect to their social circumstances.

They do not seem to realize how they fit within a society and what their responsibilities are as responsible citizens.

That is why our whole society has become an amalgam of alienated individuals whose goals are to pursue their own motives. They seem to fear responsibility and that is one of the worst things to do as a social being.

It is important to remember that rights bring responsibility, and the responsibility makes you accountable and accountability sees no blame. Passing the buck would never solve the problem. The responsibility would keep on being transferred to others and would never reach to the stage of realization.

Definitely, all the members of the society must perform their responsibilities but the leaders of the nation must be the trend setters. They need to set examples for others by performing their responsibilities without any sort of negligence.

The governments that realize their responsibilities and do not fall short of providing the people their rights are mostly appreciated and at the same time supported by their people. People, finding the governments and leaders, responsible citizens tend to do the same and thus lend a hand in the development of the country.



Where are we Heading?

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

As we turn on the media, unfortunately, we often hear dreadful words such as poverty crisis, corruption, opium, environmental degradation, war, mass destructive weapons, lack of trust, and loss of social cohesion and no sense of being in the same boat. And the opposite trend, which seems unrelated, but actually is closely linked, is that we see between word powers on the planet an increasing competition over influence. In fact, we are at the times that competition meets the areas of fragility in such a way that we see conflicts that are local, national, regional and global at the same time connected between these trends. Among these many issues, the status of Afghanistan is turning out to be in the heart of newly global conflicts while our bewildered leaders are lacking a clear outlook or policy to the future.

The primary factor behind some of the world's most destructive trends is the huge increase in the human population while there are not any global collective measures to control. This has placed giant demands on all aspects of our planet's ecology. While the rate of population increase has slowed down, the numbers of people being added per year remains near record levels at about 80 million people a year. In other words we are adding a nation the size of Iran to the world's population every year, and all trends show that this will go on out into the future and probably rise.

Predictions still show that we are facing the arrival of billions of new residents in the next fifty years with almost all of these people populating the parts of the world which can least afford the presence of more people.

Overall, the current global crises indicate that world is going to unknown destiny. Humanitarian values have been abolished; Justice for all is just a motto; the gap between the richest 20% and poorest 20% of the world is at its highest level in history and yet growing. Today the world's 500 richest families have more money than the bottom 50% of people on the earth!! Life and death are determined by money. At the moment, the number of people being slaughtered by poverty is considered to be "regrettable" but certainly politically tolerable by world leaders. Five million Africans were recently wiped out in the bloodiest war in postwar African history and thousands are killed on daily basis but the world cannot do anything. It is very likely that majority of the people annihilate in a nuclear war if they do not unite for a fair collective solution.

This also shows that current world "order" especially the human rights system has failed to protect humanity. The best way to protect human rights is to make the system work and show the people how to participate in a responsible, non-violent manner in their democracies. Human rights can only exist, as Gandhi said, when people assume human responsi-

bilities. The mindless defense of human rights in isolation will only lead to more gridlock, paralysis, and disorder. We can find way out of the crisis if we believe that every human, regardless of any consideration, deserves to live a good life.

The conditions of people in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other war-torn countries can, well, explain the issue. 15 years has passed in Afghanistan but the outcome of foreign counterterrorism efforts turning out to be in conflict with the slogans justified their presence. There are a lot of rumours, almost on daily basis, which boost scepticism as to the intention of the super power in the war on terror.

The United State has stayed in Afghanistan under the pretext of the war on terrorism longer than anywhere else in the world, even to the extent that Afghan war is America's longest war in its history, yet the results are against the mottos based on which the US justifies its presence in Afghanistan. The US-led NATO coalition also acknowledges their failure. A spokesperson of the NATO's Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan has recently said there are currently 13 active global terror groups in Afghanistan, while Al-Qaeda was the only foreign terrorist group operating here prior to NATO presence, and also the level of poppy cultivation during the Taliban regime cannot be compared with today.

The chief of National Directorate of Security (NDS) -- Afghanistan's intelligence agency - has also admitted that foreign fighters have increased in the country. Only the counting of foreign fighters is not the responsibility of NATO forces and NDS. According to security pacts Afghanistan has inked with NATO and US, decimating the terror groups is their shared duty. Afghans agreed to forge security cooperation with NATO and America because of the threat of these very terrorist outfits, thus if their presence cannot extricate and protect Afghan people from the evil of terrorism, there is no any other benefit for the sake of which Afghans can sacrifice their good relations with the regional powers. Taking into account the deteriorating security situation, people should understand that peace and prosperity are not just happened nor is it ordained by divine right. It can only take place where a significant critical mass of a nation's people is willing to take the time to serve as citizens to govern themselves. It is important that all the people of the world try to participate in a non-violent constructive manner to gain justice for all. Alternatively, given the lessons of history, the super powers must know that no one is powerful against power of God. Backing to history, the blood of innocent hungry children, widowed and orphans can destroy the House of Pharaohs. Those who do not remember the past are likely to repeat its mistakes in the future.

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The Afghanistan Agenda

India must revise its opinion of the Taliban and get its role right

By MK Bhadrakumar

The symbolic weight and the cultural residue of the cult of remembrance of things past are embedded in the Russian national psyche. They combined to make it meaningful that Moscow scheduled the trilateral meeting of Russia, China and Pakistan on Afghanistan on December 27, which is a significant anniversary date of its national history that cannot easily be decontextualised or despatialised. The Indian commentators, with their very limited vocabulary, repertoire and portfolio of text, ritual and symbol in Russia's tumultuous history altogether miss the plot when they impulsively view the 'trilateral' as an unmediated Russian dalliance with our arch enemy, Pakistan.

It was on December 27, 1979, that the first column of the Red Army under the command of Marshal Sergei Sokolov crossed the Amu Darya and entered Afghanistan from the north even as the 103rd Guards 'Vitebsk' airborne division began landing at the airport at Bagram to the north of Kabul, and the momentous deployment of Soviet troops to Afghanistan got under way. Thirty-seven years later, Moscow is preparing for another intervention in Afghanistan — as peacemaker. The question that is missing in the Indian strategic discourses is: What is it that India can do to join forces with Russia to bring the Afghan conflict to an end?

This has been the third round of the 'trilateral' format of Russia, China and Pakistan, but there is heightened interest in the outsiders' perception. Why so? For a start, Afghan war turns out to be inconclusive and an inflection point arises insofar as the war may breed new hybrid wars, which can infinitely complicate matters. The backdrop too is intriguing. The US President-elect Donald Trump's interest in following the footfalls of Barack Obama in the Hindu Kush is in serious doubt. He may cut loose early enough. There is general acceptance in American opinion that the Taliban does not threaten US interests.

Trump hasn't bothered to have a phone conversation with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. Yet, without US backing (and generous funding), Ghani faces uncertain future. He is on shaky ground, since Afghan state structures lack legitimacy. The parliamentary elections are long overdue and cannot be held and there are no elected provincial councils. Corruption and infighting tear apart Ghani's US-sponsored government. Trump would know all this. He is unlikely to throw money into black holes. Nor is he in the business of 'nation-building'. Trump doesn't fight wars unless American interests are directly threatened.

There is a concerted attempt to hype up the threat from the IS, which is gaining presence in Afghanistan in a hybrid war, as happened in Iraq and Syria. None other than the former head of US Defence Intelligence Agency (and Trump's National Security Advisor-designate) Gen Michael Flynn is on record that the IS' rise in Syria stemmed from a 'willful decision' by the Obama administration to promote the agenda to overthrow President Bashar Al-Assad. Turkey's President Recep Erdogan also claimed last week that Ankara is in possession of 'confirmed evidence, with pictures, photos and videos' regarding covert US support to IS in Syria.

Enter Russia. Moscow's best hope lies in Trump moving away from Obama's ambivalence and doublespeak on terrorism and put a full stop to using extremist Islamist groups as geopolitical tools. The se-

curity and stability of Central Asia and North Caucasus is at stake. Therefore, Russia must do what it takes to safeguard its national security interests. That is the crux of the matter regarding Russia's 'return' to Afghanistan. Russia has no option but to be proactive, because the enemy who is being driven out of Syria and Iraq might regroup any day at the gates to Central Asia and a new hybrid war may begin, tapping into the contradictions thrown up by the Taliban insurgency. Unsurprisingly, Russia began networking with China and Pakistan (and Iran), who would have similar worries regarding the US' hidden intentions, with a view to somehow bring the Afghan conflict to a settlement by integrating the Taliban.

Fundamentally, therefore, the Indian policymakers need to rethink on three core areas. First and foremost, who are the Taliban? There must be great clarity here. The Taliban began in the nineties as a Pakistani-US-Saudi proxy, which eventually accepted funding from the Al-Qaeda for want of UN aid.

It has phenomenally transformed since 2001. Today, it is a fragmented movement with an uninspiring leadership, largely based on Afghan soil. The constant has been Taliban's substantial support base among Afghan people, which makes it imperative to reconcile with it. India should have dealt with Taliban as an indigenous movement and established contacts, with the foresight that its eventual integration into Afghan politics would someday become inevitable. Most foreign players with interest in Afghanistan saw the writing on the wall — the UN, US, UK, Germany, France, Norway, Turkey, Iran, Qatar, Central Asian states, China, Russia, etc. But India kept viewing Taliban through the jihad prism of the nineties as a mere Pakistani proxy. This puts India seriously at odds with the regional and world opinion about the Taliban.

Second, the Taliban is not an India-Russia or India-Iran issue, but an issue of inept intelligence work. Simply put, our intelligence operatives found it far more agreeable (and safer) to confine themselves to dealings with Afghan counterparts, with an eye on Pakistan, instead of stepping out to the arduous field work needed to search out for Taliban who are omnipresent — including probably at the very doorstep of the Indian consulates in Jalalabad, Kandahar or Herat but not visible to the naked eye.

Policy cannot be twisted as cover-up for shoddy intelligence work. Policy stands exposed as stagnant when it fails to take into account the vicissitudes of time. Finally, stemming from the above, India's policy to use Afghanistan as a 'second front' against Pakistan negatively impacts the regional security and stability, where regional states — be it China, Central Asian States, Russia or Iran — also happen to be stakeholders. Alas, India has not cared to harmonise its policies with the regional stakeholders and instead bucked the regional trend by consorting with the Obama administration, whereas regional states view with varying degrees of disquiet the US agenda to keep the pot simmering in Afghanistan to create a raison d'être for its open-ended military presence in a strategic hub of regional politics. The spectre that is facing India is of the Trump administration reversing the Obama-era 'great game' and instead pool efforts with Russia (and China) to influence Pakistan and accelerate a peace process to integrate the Taliban. No one wants the futile war against the Taliban to continue, except apparently India. (Courtesy The Tribune, India)

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