

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



January 21, 2016

The Right Approach for Peace

Representatives from Afghanistan, US, China and Pakistan called on the Taliban to resume peace talks with the Afghan government. The quadrilateral coordination group agreed that the next meeting would again be held about two weeks in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad. According to the statement issued at the end of the second meeting in Kabul, the participants of the four-Nation talks in Kabul discussed over establishment of a roadmap for peace in Afghanistan. The Afghan government has expressed optimism over the trend of the talks among Afghanistan, US, China and Pakistan for paving the ground for resumption of peace negotiations with Taliban. Opening the talks in Kabul, Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani said that "collective will" of the group for a robust support for results-oriented peace efforts in Afghanistan has been encouraging for the Afghan government. He also praised Pakistan's willingness for using all means against those Taliban groups who refuse to denounce violence and not willing to enter peace talks with the Afghan government. The officials of the Afghan foreign ministry said that the Afghan government expects a final roadmap to be established in the next meeting of the four-Nation meeting. However, the Afghan government seems to be highly optimistic to achieve concrete results in kick-starting the stalled peace negotiations. It is hoped that the technical issues over establishing plan for direct peace negotiations with the Taliban would be concluded soon. The optimism of the Afghan and Pakistan governments indicate that the four-Nation talks are, at least for the time being, in the right direction. Many had more expectations from the quadrilateral talks in Kabul to establish a plan for resuming negotiations with the Taliban.

It is for a long time that the Afghan government is trying to kick-start peace negotiations with the Taliban to end the bloody conflict in the country. Most of the efforts have been in vain while many others were disrupted after some initial successes. The most important events in the peace efforts in past years were the opening of Taliban political office in Qatar and the direct talks between Taliban and Afghan High Peace Council. The Qatar initiative failed after former president Hamid Karzai lambasted the US for the Taliban flag raised over the group's office in Qatar and demanded closure of the office. The last one, which resulted in first direct talks between the Taliban and Afghan government failed after announcement of the death of former Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

The ongoing initiative for peace in Afghanistan is the first in its nature. It is perhaps the most important with high potential for lasting and sustainable peace negotiations with the Taliban and other insurgent groups. Highly complicated war and peace negotiations like the one going on for resolving the conflict in Afghanistan require a robust diplomacy and a right approach from the leading sides. Afghanistan cannot lead a sustained peace negotiations with the Taliban and other insurgent groups without a comprehensive regional diplomacy in support of the talks with establishing a plan governing peace negotiations. The peace initiative is needed to be backed up with capacities of the parties and countries that are believed to have influence over Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Taliban as direct stakeholders of the conflict in Afghanistan.

The Afghan government in the past sought a wrong approach in reaching out to Pakistan or directly to the Taliban. The Afghan government chose to put pressures on Pakistan to bring Taliban leaders into direct peace talks with the Afghan government. It failed to seek a broader regional and international alliance that includes Pakistan, and in the meantime, puts pressures on the country to help in restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan. But this time, presence of China and the US is crucial for convincing Pakistan to do more to bring Taliban leaders on the table of negotiations. On the other hand, the four-nation coordination group governing the process of peace talks with the Taliban is vital for mounting joint efforts for keeping the talks on track and preventing likely disruptions in the process.

The Quadrilateral Coordination Group is expected to establish the roadmap for peace negotiations with the Taliban in its next meeting in Islamabad. It is expected that the plan specify supporting roles of every country and mention key measures for starting the talks. Pakistan and government-approved sources in Afghanistan will now need to contact the Taliban for hearing from the Taliban leadership and preparing for setting venue and dates of possible talks between the group and the Afghan government. The roadmap which is expected to be finalized in Islamabad within next two weeks is expected to set the procedures for these measures. It is important for all the involved countries to discuss all aspects of a likely peace deal between Afghanistan and the Taliban. This would help Afghanistan and Pakistan find a common ground over the peace process. A key expectation of the Afghan government from the peace efforts is an apparent decrease of violence in the country. Afghan authorities have mentioned a decrease of violence in next two months as the four-nation talks are going to conclude a plan for the peace process. Reduction of level of violence in the country may be very unlikely in a shorter time but it should be one of the key issues in the initial talks with the militant group.

By Dilawar Sherzai

From a State to a Welfare State

In the political history of mankind, there have been various discussions about the state, its nature and its roles and responsibilities. Few thinkers consider it as the ultimate destiny of human beings and suggest for complete state control over the individuals, while there are some others who consider its control as a hindrance in the path of individual freedom. Some thinkers suggest for creation of ideal states that would guarantee human bliss and contentment, while some others strive to create ideal individual through the creation of better state. There were some thinkers who believed that states were formed as a contract between the ruling and the ruled, while certain philosophers and thinker deviated from them and thought that states were the natural outcome of human history. However, no absolute principles or rules are there regarding how the states were formed and how they should be and what sort of role should they perform.

In the early days of the creation of the state, influenced by monarchy, the authorities always strived for an authoritarian state, wherein it was believed that a state is an end in itself. It is created because human beings are destined to be a part of the state and his individuality can only be secured if it is sacrificed for the betterment of the state. Therefore, there was no clear distinction between the state and the government and the monarchs were all in all, enjoying every authority, while the individualism and individual human rights were completely neglected.

With the rise of the concepts of individualism and utilitarianism in Europe, the concepts of individual rights and liberty also started getting strength. The political thinkers like Bentham and J.S. Mill played dominant roles in defining the roles, responsibilities and liberty of individual in relation to the society. Both were great English philosophers and political thinkers of 19th century whose works on liberty justified freedom of the individual in opposition to unlimited state control.

Mill believed that the individual was getting lost in the society. To Mill, this increasing regulation and elimination of the individual was a wrong and harmful development. He believed that the progress of society depended largely on the originality and energy of the individual. He, therefore, was a great advocate of individualism i.e. of the supreme necessity and importance of the individual developing in his own lines, as far as possible, to the supreme perfection of his personality, for his own good and that of the society. Mill believed that an individual had two aspects to his life i.e. (1) the individual aspect which concerned him alone, and (2) the social, because every individual was also an integral part of society. The actions of the individual may similarly be divided into two categories i.e. (1) self regarding, and (2) others regarding. With regard to ac-

tions in which he alone is concerned, his liberty of action is complete and should not be regulated by the state. However, in actions of the individual, which affect the society, his actions can justifiably be regulated by the state or society. The sole end for which mankind are warranted individually or collectively in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number is self protection. The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. Mill seemed to overemphasize the liberty of the individual and did not favor sanctions from the government regarding individual liberties. The impact of utilitarianism and individualism supported in laying the foundations of modern democracy, which stood for individualism; but for some of the states the evolution did not stop and they took another leap, and strived to design the state for the welfare of the individual and thus they laid the foundations of "Welfare State".

A welfare state is a state that strives for the social and economic welfare of the public. The individuals in a welfare state may not be enjoying absolute freedom but they have the opportunity to enjoy the availability of the basic requirements, free education and health facilities, justice and fair play, rule of law and meager disparity between the rich and the poor. Welfare state has in its nature to serve the people not to rule them. It always pursues good governance. Therefore, it has great respect for accountability, transparency and justice. The government policies are clear to the public and the public has the capacity to hold the government accountable for any sort of corruption or misuse of power.

It also ensures participation of different strata of the society in the affairs of the government. Women are not neglected in the social, economic and political spheres and they get equal opportunities as men. Moreover, minorities are given equal rights and protection.

Justice is easily accessible. Discrimination is almost non-existent. The law is not only to serve the rich but takes into consideration all the people alike.

Practically, there are examples of welfare states in our today's world. The Nordic Countries, such as Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland mostly follow a sort of Welfare state model called as Nordic Model. And, these are the countries that have the best facilities for the public and the least corruption, crime and imbalances.

It is wiser for human beings to create states that can guarantee their well-being and their existence. States must serve the public and provide opportunity for them to live better lives and to become better human beings.

Abdul Ahad Bahrami is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at ahad.bahrami@gmail.com

Uniting to Prevent Violent Extremism

By Ban Ki-moon

Violent extremism is a direct assault on the United Nations Charter and a grave threat to international peace and security.

Terrorist groups such as Daesh, Boko Haram and others have brazenly kidnapped young girls, systematically denied women's rights, destroyed cultural institutions, warped the peaceful values of religions, and brutally murdered thousands of innocents around the world.

These groups have become a magnet for foreign terrorist fighters, who are easy prey to simplistic appeals and siren songs.

The threat of violent extremism is not limited to any one religion, nationality or ethnic group. Today, the vast majority of victims worldwide are Muslims.

Addressing this challenge requires a unified response, and compels us to act in a way that solves - rather than multiplies -- the problem.

Many years of experience have proven that short-sighted policies, failed leadership, heavy-handed approaches, a single-minded focus only on security measures and an utter disregard for human rights have often made things worse.

Let us never forget: Terrorist groups are not just seeking to unleash violent action, but to provoke a harsh reaction.

We need cool heads and common sense. We must never be ruled by fear - or provoked by those who strive to exploit it.

Countering violent extremism should not be counter-productive. This month, I presented to the United Nations General Assembly a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which takes a practical and comprehensive approach to address the drivers of this menace. It focuses on violent extremism which can be conducive to terrorism.

The Plan puts forward more than 70 recommendations for concerted action at the global, regional and national levels, based on five inter-related points:

Number one, we must put prevention first

The international community has every right to defend against this threat using lawful means, but we must pay particular attention to addressing the causes of violent extremism if this problem is to be resolved in the long run.

There is no single pathway to violent extremism. But we know that extremism flourishes when human rights are violated, political space is shrunk, aspirations for inclusion are ignored, and too many people - especially young people - lack prospects and meaning in their lives.

As we see in Syria and Libya and elsewhere, violent extremists make unresolved and prolonged conflicts even more intractable.

We also know the critical elements for success: Good governance. The rule of law. Political participation. Quality education and decent jobs. Full respect for human rights.

We need to make a special effort to reach out to young people and recognize their potential as peacebuilders. The protection and empowerment of women must also be central to our response.

Second, principled leadership and effective institutions

Poisonous ideologies do not emerge from thin air. Oppression, corruption and injustice are greenhouses for resentment. Extremists are adept at cultivating alienation.

That is why I have been urging leaders to work harder to build inclusive institutions that are truly accountable to people. I will continue to call on leaders to listen carefully to the grievances of their people and then act to address them.

Third, preventing extremism and promoting human rights go hand-in-hand

All too often, national counter-terrorism strategies have lacked basic elements of due process and respect for the rule of law. Sweeping definitions of terrorism or violent extremism are often used to criminalize the legitimate actions of opposition groups, civil society organizations and human rights defenders. Governments should not use these types of sweeping definitions as a pretext to attack or silence one's critics.

Once again, violent extremists deliberately seek to incite such over-reactions. We must not fall into the trap.

Fourth, an all-out approach

The Plan proposes an "all of Government" approach. We must break down the silos between the peace and security, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian actors at the national, regional and global levels - including at the United Nations. The Plan also recognizes that there are no "one size fits all" solutions. We must also engage all of society - religious leaders, women leaders, youth groups leaders in the arts, music and sports, as well as the media and private sector.

Fifth, UN engagement

I intend to strengthen a UN system-wide approach to supporting Member States' efforts to address the drivers of violent extremism.

Above all, the Plan is an urgent call to unity and action that seeks to address this scourge in all its complexity.

Together, let us pledge to forge a new global partnership to prevent violent extremism.

Ban Ki-moon is Secretary-General of the United Nations.



Daily Outlook
AFGHANISTAN
The Leading Independent Newspaper

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa
Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari
Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019
www.outlookafghanistan.net



The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.

