

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



January 21, 2018

Suicide Attack: Assessing the Role of Culture and Religion

Suicide terrorism is one of the phenomena that the Afghan people in general and those who live in Kabul in specific face it as a common war issue in the country. Kabul witnessed another suicide attack on Kabul intercontinental Hotel, today, 21 Jan. Suicide bombing and attacks is now a political and strategic problem in our society. Suicide terrorism requires us to analysis this phenomena in a comprehensive manner in order to find its root causes and address them duly. One of the issues that everyone may agree about it is; the almost epidemic-like increase of suicide attacks over the last decade in our country, especially, past 6 years. Today, Taliban, ISIL and other terrorist organizations rely heavily on suicide attacks to achieve major political goals with the least cost, and according to the Pape, "the attacks are growing in both tempo and location". Suicide terrorism maybe political or transcendental. And the typical Afghan suicide terrorism is religious. They are motivated basically by the effectiveness of suicide bombing as a military strategy, need to national and personal humiliation and hatred of The Westerns and their national allies.

Means of Suicide terrorism

According to Crenshaw, "technological improvements in explosive devices alongside the growing ease of access to technological information on the Internet are main major factors in the increased use of suicide bombing in terror attacks". The means in Afghanistan both are provided by local and neighboring countries to their specific agents to continue the proxy war in the country. Since the terrorist groups have high illegal incomes, they easily can access to these means through the local and international markets.

Cultural and Religious Factors

Culture and religion are the two strong factors that can motivate and direct the people to suicide. The research shows that they also influence concepts and expectations of life after death as well. According to Durkheim (1898/1951), the wide differences in suicide rates across countries are probably explained at least by cultural and religious differences.

Although, Islam promises life after death, it condemns suicide as a means of achieving it. Islam permits a person to kill him only when doing so that prevents from committing a murder, performing incest or worshipping a false god. In Islam, the preservation of life, supersedes all other religious and social dicta and even preserving the life of a person has been considered as equal to preserving the life of the whole humanity. Persons who commit suicide for other than permitted reasons are maligned; they may be buried only outside the cemetery.

For a true Muslim, using suicide is not a method of attaining goals. They draw a line between suicide and martyrdom in a way that precludes suicide bombing. Nonetheless, I would like to clear it that Islam has strictly forbidden suicide. The Shiite survival code (Taqiyya) adheres strongly to the preservation of life.

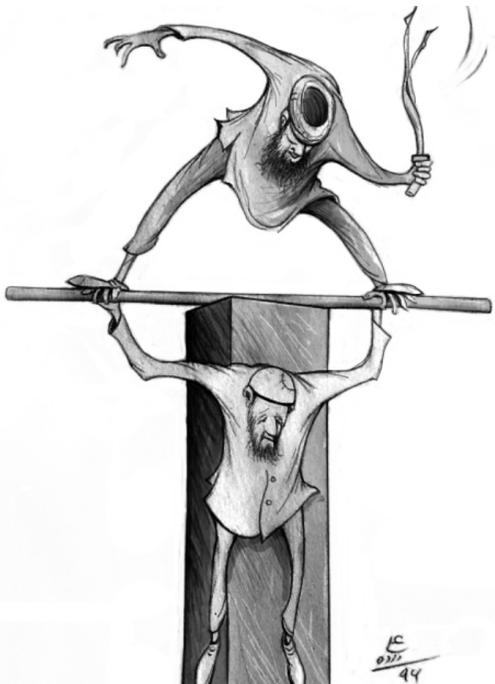
How, then, the suicide terrorists explain suicide bombing?

False Information, the terrorist organizations provide false information to their affiliates; they put all blames on the shoulders of their enemies and claim they are only the victims of the war. For, example the Afghan Taliban group claims that, "The war has been imposed on them". And they just defend the Islamic Emirate and the people of Afghanistan against the foreign invaders.

Misusing Jihad, as a self defense strategy

Islam has allowed the Muslims, to defend themselves and their territories if attacked by the enemies. Here, the role of religion in justification of suicide is very paramount; because religion as the framework of action and culture as the operational zing apparatus of the Islamic teaching can be vilely misused by the terrorist groups to motivate the Muslims to join their overall Jihad campaign including the suicide terrorism. According to the Jihad Strategy of the terrorist groups, 'Self Defense', is the core object of their war and 'Jihad, is the strategic apparatus that can realize this goal.

To motivate enough the Muslims, especially those with very little education and a superficial knowledge of Islamic teaching, they target to attract the conservative Muslims, as the most vulnerable victims of their war campaign. They also, misuse some of the Holy Quran verses, as if the other religions followers, especially the Jews and Christians, are the arch enemies of the Muslims which the United States of America and Israel symbolizes them, as they claim. Using this tactic, they have succeeded to attract the vulnerable segments of the society and have used the most conservative ones as the most strategic tools of their war; the suicide bombers, with few costs and huge achievements. To sum it up, suicide bombing is increasing used as strategic tool by the terrorist groups to achieve their goals. Although, suicide is not allowed in Islam, the terrorist groups have successfully misused 'Jihad', the Self Defense, as justification tool to deceive the consereate members of the society to act as their strategic tool against their western and pro western allies in Islamic countries, including Afghanistan.



Challenges of Democracy in Afghanistan

By Maryam Hashemi

Openness is one of the main characteristics of democracy. Democracy opens the political process to all actors including those who oppose it. This characteristic is both the strength and weakness of the democracy especially in countries with weak economy and strong authoritarian systems like Afghanistan. Election is one the areas that show the weakness and strength of democracy in emerging democracies very well. Powerful traditional groups with strong religious backgrounds have used this characteristic of democracy in emerging democracies to ensure their own interests and have put in danger the future of new and fragile liberal democratic institutions. These groups either intend to impose theocratic authoritarian institutions or are willing to forego their objectives and subject themselves to democratic control. In the first case the outcome of such act is clear: democratization fails, through the full implementation of the traditional religious groups. In the second case the outcome is unclear: democratization may fail, but it may also succeed. This article explores the second case.

Incumbents in an emerging democracy like Afghanistan face challenges who are likely to win a mandate that make it possible for them to apply their transformational and reform program. Incumbents, in control of the state's repressive apparatus, seek guarantees to protect their basic interests and their future access to power, while challengers seek power so that they can enact their program. To complicate matters further, both incumbents and challengers typically are divided internally into moderate ad radical groups.

This strategic setting has two fundamental underlying features. First, neither incumbents nor challengers can turn their preferences into policy. In emerging democracies like Afghanistan traditional groups usually make the most use from democratic processes like elections to undermine democracy or get it to fail. As in emerging democracies, both ballots and bullets are available, democracy only can be the outcome of compromise and we have observed it in all elections of Afghanistan with no exceptions.

Second, contrary to typical transitions compromise is hindered by challengers, traditional and religious identity, as well as by the expectation that they are likely to win an electoral majority that will make possible the full implementation of their program. Incumbents, including military apparatus of these groups and secular democrats, find this prospect unacceptable. While an institutional mechanism,

coalition cabinet, imposes compromise on plurality winners, only force or the threat of force can prevent mandate winners from implementing their full program. In emerging democracies constitutional provisions of checks and balances are not enough. Incumbents find it easier to resort to force before the lose elections (when they are certain that they will lose the elections), rather than after they have lost. However, resorting to force after they have lost is also an option on the table yet. However, the use of force by incumbents ends democratization and compromise though prevent it will hinder structural reforms may the liberal groups had on their agenda to implement after winning the elections.

As we have seen in Afghanistan, when the incumbents control the state's repressive apparatus and challengers cannot enforce their electoral victory, the accession of challengers to power following their electoral victory presupposes the incumbents' acquiescence. Rational challengers in such situations will have an incentive to signal that, once in power, they will behave moderately and will even guarantee the incumbents' interests (integrating them in the system and sharing the power to some extent with them). However, rational incumbents may distrust (in most cases) such signals and view the challengers as a "Trojan Horse" as it is the case in countries like Afghanistan. The challengers' credibility is further undermined by their reputation for "pious passions, strong beliefs, and inflexible values" and their ideological principles, which include (or are plausibly seen to include) the rejection of liberal democracy and liberal values as a principle. Yet for democratization to succeed in Afghanistan, it is necessary for traditional religious groups to solve their commitment problem. They must send credible signals about their post electoral behavior prior to the elections an issue that has never happened in Afghanistan and has always threatened and undermined the legitimacy of the elections and acted as barrier to recognize the democracy its mandates.

To sum it up, democracy is an open system. This characteristic of democracy keeps the door open for all sides to take part in democratic processes for both liberal and traditional groups pursuing their own agendas. Democracy may sustain its path in Afghanistan if traditional religious groups have a moderate interpretation from Islamic teachings and compromise on shared values of Islam and democracy instead of focusing on controversial issues.

Quality of Life Depends on Quality of Food

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Scientific studies have confirmed that there is close relationship between sound life and sound food system. Poor quality food can have negative effect on our brain, personality, health and eventually led to a weak and sick generation. Many medical culinary textbooks of the time describe the relationship between food and mood. For example, quince, dates and elderberries used as mood enhancers, lettuce and chicory as tranquilizers, and apples, pomegranates, beef and eggs as erotic stimulants. In recent times, we have seen immense progress in research, primarily short-term human trials and animal studies, showing how certain foods change brain structure, chemistry, and physiology thus affecting mood and performance. These studies suggest that foods directly influencing brain neurotransmitter systems have the greatest effects on mood, at least temporarily.

In turn, mood can also influence our food choices and expectations on the effects of certain foods can influence our perception. Thus, it is approved that the scarcity of nutrients such as iron and iodine can impair cognitive and motor development, and these effects are often irreversible. Iodine deficiency can lead to enlargement of the thyroid and irreparable mental retardation in infants and children whose mothers were iodine deficient during pregnancy. Moreover, chlorine, folic acid, and zinc, to name just a few — have been linked specifically to early brain functioning.

It has confirmed children who do not have enough to eat wind up with diminished capacity to understand and learn. quality of food and certain nutrients such as vitamins A, D, B12 and K2 are the most critical factors for the brain to form, to develop and to function properly, for good mental health and for nervous system to function normally, and deficiencies manifest as psychiatric disorders, such as obsessive-compulsive behavior, irrational anger, depression, manic depression, Alzheimer's and dementia.

As pointed out, there is relationship between food and mood; According to one study, insufficient amounts of thiamine or Vitamin B1 caused "introversion, inactivity, fatigue, decreased self-confidence and generally poorer mood" in participants. Improved thiamine status increases well-being, sociability, and overall energy levels. Thiamine is contained in foods such as cereal grains, yeast, potatoes, cauliflower, oranges, and eggs and can influence mood states. In addition, Iron deficiency represents one of the most common nutritional problems in both developing and developed countries affecting over 2 billion people worldwide. Iron deficiency anemia can result in depressed mood, lethargy and problems with attention. A low iron status is most common among women, children, vegetarians, and people who follow a diet. Iron deficiency also results in a decreased ability to exercise. Foods rich in iron include liver, vegetables such as broccoli, aspara-

gus, and parsley, seafood, iron-fortified grains, greens, nuts, meat, and dried fruits. Also Studies have found that diets low in carbohydrates increased feelings of anger, depression, and tension and diets high in protein and low in carbohydrates increased anger. Diets high in carbohydrates have a generally uplifting effect on mood.

According to a study, female and male participants were asked to report how their eating patterns changed with emotions of anger, fear, sadness, and joy. When experiencing anger and joy, participants experienced increased hunger as compared to feelings of fear and sadness. Anger increased comfort and impulsive eating, and joy increased eating for pleasure. It also found that people eat more less-healthy comfort foods when they are sad. Participants of watching a happy or a sad movie and were provided with buttered popcorn or seedless grapes throughout the movie. The group watching the upbeat movie consumed significantly more grapes and less popcorn than the group watching the sad movie. as well, when participants were provided with nutritional information, the sad people consumed less popcorn than the happy people and the happy people did not alter their consumption.

To summarize, we are those low quality foods that we eat and slowly affected over our personality, brain and health system. but we forgot the importance this matter. Almost 90% our food items are imported but there is no accurate system to ensure they impose no problem to our health. For instance, we excessively use the lowest quality wheat flour while the wheat, especially the modern and the processed wheat, is being increasingly blamed for the onset of other health conditions, like obesity, heart disease, neurological impairment, dementia, cataracts, diabetes, arthritis and visceral fat accumulation. The modern flour is processed into 60% extraction, bleached white flour - the standard for most wheat products means that 40% of the original wheat grain is removed.

So not only do we have an unhealthier, modified, and hybridized strain of wheat, we also receive the removed and degraded nutritional value. Unfortunately, the 40% that gets removed includes the bran and the germ of the wheat grain - its most nutrient-rich parts. In the process of making 60% extraction flour, over half of the vitamin B1, B2, B3, E, folic acid, calcium, phosphorus, zinc, copper, iron, and fiber are lost. Any processed foods with wheat are akin to poison for the body since they cause more health risks than benefits. Unfortunately, we forgot this proverb, "sound mind is in sound body" if we may get stressed in the family, easily get impatient with neighbor or our children fail in exam might be the direct reason of food causing health problem, mental disorder, and mental impairment today, if we do not pay attention the issues, the outcome will be weak, sick and mentally retarded generations.

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