

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



July 02, 2017

The Undying Class Disparities

A glance at Afghan society will clearly depict that there is a marked division between the rich and the poor. This division has existed for a long period in Afghan history. When the society was overwhelmingly tribal and feudal and was led by monarchy, the situation was no different. The king, his relatives, the landlords, and tribal heads had most of the authority and power by dint of their wealth, while the poor people, mostly farmers, had to face lack of resources, wealth and ultimately power.

The situation has not improved much even in today's Afghanistan. Though, the country is said to be democratic, it still remains tribal to a large extent. And, more unfortunate is the fact that the socio-political setup has not changed much in its essence. There have been certain changes in the appearance or the attire but the infrastructure still remains the same.

Afghan society can be easily divided into two classes, factions or strata, whatever they are named. There are marked differences between both the classes and they can be easily observed. A very dominant and clear line can be drawn between them and the gap between them can be observed conveniently. Ill-fatedly, that gap seems to be getting wider with each passing day.

The intervention of international community, though changed Afghan society to certain extent, it could not bring about real change. In fact, it further widened the gap between the rich and the poor. The wealth that poured in the country for assistance and help could only find the rich people waiting for them.

Therefore, they made sure that it did not reach the poor and deserving masses and made sure to strengthen their position with its support. This intensification in inequality can be easily observed in different parts of the country.

For example, in capital Kabul, through cursory observation one can find the unevenness in the so-called development - poor and muddy houses can be easily observed in the shadows of tall buildings and in similar fashion various groups of poor children can be found running after or beside luxury cars for alms.

Apart from that, its manifestations can be found in various other ways as well. Just consider the way the law and order system treat the people. There is a marked difference between how the rich people are treated by it, and how the poor are victimized.

Those among the rich who might have earned all their earnings through illegal means, can easily avoid any sort of punishment by law enforcement agencies. They can threaten the police, dodge them or even bribe them. They can even buy the decisions of the courts in their favor.

There is no way they can be punished. If they have no other way, they can even escape easily from the country. While there are many poor people, who might have not done any crime or may have committed small crimes so as to fulfill the overgrowing necessities of life, to serve their families or to find some morsels of food can be caught easily, and more easily can they be punished. Thus justice has itself become the will of the rich.

This division is not a natural phenomenon. There can be rich and poor in a society but in Afghanistan they have reached to the extreme. There are extremely rich and poor people and the gap between them is ever widening. This generates injustice and also a sense of dispossession. The ones who are deprived, who are intentionally kept away from the facilities and treated in the worst possible manner, will become nonconformist.

They will definitely rise against the government and against the system. They know that they would not be provided the deserving rights; therefore, they will opt for illegal means and will thus generate many social evils.

There should be necessary measures to curb the situation. First, it should be made sure that justice should be maintained in its true spirit, i.e. it must not favor only the upper class; rather the upper class itself should be treated by the law and order system in the same way as the other classes.

To put it in simpler terms it can be said that social stratification should not be changed to social injustice.

Second, social mobility should be made smoother in our society. For example, it should not be very difficult for a person taking birth in a lower class to work hard, develop the capability and move to the middle and even to upper class.

There should be equal opportunities for almost all the members of the society to excel in their lives and become rich. The reverse should be maintained as well, i.e. the people born in rich families but not working hard should be pushed to the lower strata. Social mobility should be able to provide some oxygen for the social setup to inhale so that it must keep on living.



How to Achieve Sustainable Development?

By Hujjatullah Zia

We live in "the global village" where human societies share organic relations. When a country sustains economic recession, prosperity is harmed everywhere. When a person suffers from a new flu, all are at risk. When nuclear weapon is pursued by one nation, all nations are susceptible to the risk of nuclear attack. When violent extremists spill the blood of individuals in one corner of the world, the entire globe is affected mentally and emotionally. And when innocents are slaughtered in Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan, the public conscience is outraged. That is what it means we live in "the global village" and share this world in the 21st century.

Currently, the world is left at the mercy of terrorism. Terrorist networks have changed into global threat seeking to expand their reach. Terrorists murder innocent civilians, including women and children, on a massive scale around the world.

Confronting violent extremism in all of its forms is the first issue the world has to begin. To combat terrorism and mitigate extremism, we have to find out the root causes. It is believed that poverty is one of the main reasons behind extremism. A number of individuals join terrorist networks to alleviate their hunger and financial urges. Luckily, the first objective of the "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" is to put an end to poverty and hunger and promote well-being. This fact indicates that poverty plays a highly destructive role in human societies and should be eradicated.

The Belt and Road Initiative (B&R), which was raised by Chinese President Xi Jinping in September and October 2013, is one of the mechanisms to alleviate poverty. The B&R is supported by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund with the aim of promoting regional and global trades and supporting sustainable development. So, the world should take more practical step in this regard so as to end poverty which will reduce extremism.

Lack of education is the second reason behind growing extremism. No wonder, the uneducated layer of a society will be more vulnerable to terrorist networks. According to my knowledge, those who live in tribal belts, where educational institutions are lacking, easily fall for the bogus claim of terrorist networks. Since one out of the 17 objectives of 'the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' is providing learning opportunity and quality education, the world should broaden the individuals' horizon through extending educational programs and vocational institutions.

Violence and discrimination against women is widespread, mainly in societies where patriarchal system rules. Women's social, political and economic role is curtailed in light of cultural restrictions and traditional worldview. The fundamental groups and militant fighters, who practice upon misogynistic view, also pose a serious threat to women. For instance, women lose their lives in terrorist attacks and suicide bombings in war-torn countries. Women are exploited and murdered in

cold blood by the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group, the Taliban, al-Qaeda, to name but a few. To end sexual discrimination and violence against women, all nations have to act upon the fact that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" regardless of their race, color and sex, which has been stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and all countries should include this article in their constitutions so as to protect women's rights and dignity and achieve gender equality.

Climate change and air pollution are believed to pose strong threat to people around the world and cause silent death. A large number of people lose their lives annually as a result of air pollution. Combating climate change is also the goal 13 of "the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The world needs to reduce pollution through supporting planting trees and preventing deforestation, saving energy and provoking sense of responsibility for companies and stakeholders. Similarly, the world should cut greenhouse gas emission and limit the temperature increase so as to reduce the risk and sustain environmental integrity. The best way to mitigate climate change and support sustainable development is to practice upon the "Paris Agreement".

To reduce extremism and build a world void of violence and bloodshed and to combat poverty, the human societies need to "act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" as it is stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and strengthen global partnership in this "global village". We have to respect the rights and dignity of all members of the human family. We have to seek common grounds and share common principles - principles of freedom, justice, tolerance and dignity. To reduce violence, the cycle of hatred and mistrust must end. In brief, religious tolerance, racial equality and respecting human rights and liberty will catalyze reaching sustainable development but contempt for human rights will lead to violence and cruel practices.

Words alone cannot meet our collective needs, these needs will be met if we take practical step boldly. Moreover, only military power cannot eradicate war and militancy in war-torn countries such as Iraq, Syria, Pakistan and Afghanistan, this fact has been proved in Afghanistan and the "war on terror" did not bear the desired result. Besides targeting the sanctuaries of terrorist networks, no matter where they are, we need to pursue a non-violent mechanism, too, namely holding negotiation and eradicating poverty, lack of education, intolerance and racial injustice.

Streams of blood have been shed as a result of the protracted war and terrorism. People have been murdered on the grounds of their caste, color and creed. These outrageous acts will shake our collective conscience. We are all responsible and have to promote friendly relations among the nations. We have the responsibility to work for the time when the mothers of Afghans, Iraqis, Syrians, Israelis and Palestinians see their children grow up in a peaceful environment.

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Gulf Crisis Set to Escalate

By James M. Dorsey

The Gulf crisis that pits Saudi Arabia and the UAE against Qatar is set to escalate with Doha certain to ignore Monday's deadline that it complies with demands that would undermine Qatari sovereignty and humiliate Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani at a time that he is riding high on a wave of Qatari nationalism sparked by the Gulf crisis.

Four weeks into the crisis, the demands appear to have been crafted for what is becoming a longer battle that the two Gulf states hope will end with Qatar, with or without Sheikh Tamim, adopting policies crafted in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have declared the demands to be non-negotiable, offered Qatar no face-saving way out of the crisis, and appear to have designed them to be deliberately insulting. The Saudi-UAE-led coalition against Qatar is likely to further tighten the boycott of Qatar once the Monday deadline passes. However, UAE State Minister for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash's prediction of a parting of ways, which ultimately could include Qatar leaving the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that groups the Gulf's monarchies, would neither reduce tensions or end the crisis. Neither would an effort to suspend Qatar's membership of the Arab League. Saudi and UAE perceptions of Qatari policies as a threat to the survival of their regimes would not be allayed by a divorce that would allow Qatar to continue to chart its own course. It is those perceptions that drove the two countries to launch their zero-sum game. Moreover, a Qatar capable of defying its more powerful neighbours would put on public display limits to Saudi and UAE power.

The lesson of the past weeks is that Qatar can survive the boycott as long as countries like Turkey and Iran help it meet its food and water requirements, retains access to international shipping lanes, maintains its oil and gas exports; and has uninterrupted, normal dealings with the international financial system. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar have so far exempted oil and gas from their fight. Qatar continues to pump natural gas to the UAE through a partially Emirati-owned pipeline. Dubai is dependent on Qatar for 40 percent of its gas.

Similarly, Saudi Arabia has been careful not to disrupt the tanker market and complicate Qatar's energy exports by blocking shared vessel loadings. Such a move would create logistical challenges not only for Qatar but also for the kingdom's own clients who would be forced to reorganize dozens of cargoes. It could also reduce the number of available vessels and drive up shipping costs.

Qatar hopes that its ability to defy the boycott will force Saudi Arabia and the UAE to tighten the boycott in ways that could backfire. Potentially, that could happen if Saudi Arabia and the UAE act on a threat to take a you-are-with-us-or-against-us approach towards their trading and commercial partners. That would put to the test, Saudi Arabia and the UAE's ability to impose their will on others.

So far, it's not been easy going for Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Qatar refuses to bend, most Muslim countries are unwilling to follow the Saudi-UAE lead, and many in the international community are irritated by the two countries' approach that threatens to complicate the fight against the Islamic State, risks volatility in energy markets, and increases instability in what is already the world's most unstable region. Despite denials, Saudi Arabia and the UAE's take-it-or-leave-it approach appears to include the option of fostering an environment conducive to regime change if Qatar proves capable of circumventing the boycott for an extended period of time.

State-controlled media in the kingdom and the Emirates contributed to efforts to undermine Sheikh Tamim's position with for the Gulf almost unprecedented attacks on Qatar's ruling Al Thani clan and interviews with little known dissident family members as well as former military officers opposed to the emir's policies.

The Saudi and UAE strategy risks painting the two countries into a corner with Qatari support for Sheikh Tamim complicating suggestions voiced by a prominent Saudi journalist with close ties to the government and a Washington-based Saudi lobbyist that the brutal 2013 Egyptian coup that brought general-turned-president Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to power could be repeated in Qatar in some form or fashion. Saudi and UAE tactics as well as some of the demands that include halting support for militants and Islamists, closing a Turkish military base in the Gulf state, reducing relations with Iran, and shuttering Qatar-sponsored media, including the controversial Al Jazeera television network, could however prove to be a double-edged sword.

In a move that likely contributed to turning Qatari public opinion against them, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, citing unsubstantiated allegations that the Gulf state supported Houthi rebels, expelled their nemesis from the Saudi-led military coalition fighting the insurgents in Yemen a day after six Qatari soldiers were wounded defending the kingdom's southern flank. The two Gulf states implicitly included Houthi rebels in Yemen in their demand that Qatar break off its relations with militants and Islamists. While there is little doubt that Qatar at times went too far in nurturing those relationships, it is equally clear that some of them enjoyed tacit Western and Saudi backing.

In the case of the Houthis, Qatar likely maintained clandestine contacts while joining the Saudi-led fight against them given Qatar's repeated efforts over a period of more than a decade to mediate between the rebels, the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and the kingdom. Qatar negotiated since 2004 various ceasefires in intermittent wars between the government and the Houthis only to see them thwarted with the support of Saudi Arabia. Former US diplomats in cables to the State Department while serving in Yemen and more recently in interviews suggested that Saudi Arabia's obsession with the Houthis predates the rebels closer relationship with Iran since the invasion began in 2015. If anything, Saudi obsession drove them further into the hands of the Iranians. Moreover, closer analysis of the Saudi and UAE demands creates the impression that certainly in the case of the kingdom the pot at times is blaming the kettle. Abd al-Wahhab Muhammad Abd al-Rahman Al-Humayqani, the only Yemeni on the Saudi-UAE list of alleged terrorists associated with the two Gulf states' demands, is a US Treasury designated terrorist linked to Al Qaeda who, reportedly lives at least part-time in the Saudi capital. The Treasury designation in 2013 did not prevent the Saudis from including Mr. Al-Humayqani in the delegation of the Saudi-backed government to failed peace talks in 2015 or from serving as an advisor to Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, who is resident in the kingdom. All of this makes hopes for a negotiated solution of the Gulf crisis all but an illusion. Maintaining the status quo is not an option for Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Escalation of the crisis is risky not only for the Gulf states themselves but also for the international community. Yet, pulling the protagonists back from the brink without loss of face is a non-starter as long as both sides of the divide target absolute victory at whatever cost.

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