

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



July 08, 2019

Will Afghans put Afghanistan First?

Respecting our country is of one of the most important duties of us as an Afghan citizen. Any Afghan citizen should be aware of the same and respect the various integral aspects associated with our country. This can help to promote the ideals of mutual trust and goodwill. All Afghans should work together to ensure that the integrity and esteem of our country is maintained in high regard.

Germany and Qatar are co-hosting an Intra-Afghan Dialogue Conference held in Doha that will continue for two days, 7 and 8 July, as a series of efforts to support the peace process in Afghanistan. The delegation includes political figures, former Jihadi leaders, governmental officials, representatives of the minority groups including women and youth.

Therefore, Afghanistan stands at a critical moment of opportunity for progress towards peace, stability and prosperity. This opportunity is a necessary component of any process leading to a direct engagement between different groups of Afghans.

There is no doubt that only Afghans themselves can decide the future of their country and an Intra-Afghan Dialogue can facilitate to identify the options and opportunities in this direct engagement. Political analysts hold that this event can contribute to trust-building among key stakeholders, representing a wide range of the Afghan people and society.

How Afghans Can Advance the Afghan Peace Process

The first step to reach a peace deal in Afghanistan is to agree to resolve political differences without force, a big lesson that Afghans shall learn from the tragedy of the last 40 years. Considering the huge ideological and political differences between the Afghan Government, Afghan Politicians and Taliban, reaching an agreement is very difficult. As a result, if they want to reach a deal to end the war and confront our differences in a civilized manner based on the Afghan traditional dispute resolution and international best practices. They shall really accept each other's values and tolerate each other's thoughts. Although Afghan government, Afghan Politicians, and the US shall consider the different aspects of the peace deal in order to ensure it as a comprehensive deal, they may not be able to satisfy the critics. Because, no peace agreement would have been good for them because they play politics with it, with a view to ensure their personal interests.

What Could Threaten the Likely Peace Deal?

There are many critical variables that may impact the peace deal negatively. Some of the most important of them include, leaving unresolved the key crucial points such as the type of the governance system, delayed implementation of the deal could jeopardize any possibility for peace to take hold, leaving disregarded the minority groups to see further revisions before the deal is signed, and continuation of the attacks on civilians. If these happen, there could be a risk of new incidents, more lives could be lost and there could be many more at risk.

Afghan peace talks have reached to a crucial phase; Intra-Afghan talks. Peace talks in Afghanistan have failed several times though most of the Afghan expected a fair deal to put an end to the 40 years of the conflict in the country. The success of the Intra-Afghan talks depends on the full involvement of the Afghan government, and other key stakeholders, representing a wide range of the Afghan people and society. The last but not the least, the only guarantee to reach a sustainable peace deal is that All Afghans put Afghanistan's national interest first to their own interests.

Eternal Wisdom Vs Haltered

By: Sherzai

It can be observed in our today's world that there has been increase in the negative energy displayed by human beings in different forms. The worst of its types can be found in the prevailing hatred among human beings based on different ideas and concepts. Some of them are because of simple jealousy; others may be because of nationalistic sentiments, religious differences and ideological parities. There are many occasions when these manifestations of hatred turn into ugly wars; then what follows is never hidden from any one.

It is a fact that no two human beings are alike. There are differences among them and the same can be said about the two or more groups of people as well. As they belong to different socio-political circumstances, they are bound to be different. These differences may result into disagreements and anger as well. And, on certain occasions these disagreements become necessary for the positive evolution of the society. If there is no disagreement there is no improvement. But the situation becomes worse when the disagreements and anger turn into hatred. It can be found that they can take many shapes; an inarticulate mumble of discontent, tears of frustration, scream of rage, confident roar of unease, confusion, a longing, a critical vibration and antagonism and all these can only be hurdles in the way of conquering the world with love and affection and making it a better place to live, as wonderfully explained by C. JoyBell C., "Anger is like flowing water; there's nothing wrong with it as long as you let it flow. Hate is like stagnant water; anger that you denied yourself the freedom to feel, the freedom to flow; water that you gathered in one place and left to rot. Stagnant water becomes dirty, stinky, disease-ridden, poisonous, deadly; that is your hate. On flowing water travels little paper boats; paper boats of forgiveness. Allow yourself to feel anger, allow your waters to flow, along with all the paper boats of forgiveness. Be human."

It is really unfortunate to note that during the last century in course of three decades, there were two major world wars; even now, many years after the Second World War, there is lack of amity and friendliness among the nations of the world. Have a glance at the contemporary socio-political scenario, the facts will be revealed easily. Consider the situation in our own country Afghanistan. The hatred among our people has reached to such a degree that people are ready to kill themselves in order to quench the thirst of revenge against others. Have a look at the situation in Middle East and Africa. The wars and instability have proved the fact that human beings do not have any feeling of humanity and kindness for each other. Analyze the growing competition among the nations of the world regarding the mad race of nuclear weapons. All these examples clearly show that we are no more possessing the quality that distinguishes us from

other creatures - the quality of sane mind and humane feelings. At the same time we are wasting our energy by following hatred, which in Haruki Murakami's view is like a two-edged sword. When you cut the other person, you cut yourself. The more violently you hack at the other person, the more violently you hack at yourself. It can often be fatal. But it is not easy to dispose of.

In such a scenario, it is difficult to imagine that human beings will use their immense power of love and belongingness? At present, nations of the world have plans to use their great power for destruction but this cannot go on; human beings should not be so mad to end their lives with their own hands. They need to ponder carefully and they have to come up with better decisions. If they persist on their present course and continue to send out destructive vibration of in-harmony, antagonism, hatred, selfishness and greed instead of the constructive vibration of brotherhood and cooperation. More and more people will forget their souls and care about their bodies. The greatest sin and corruption will reign on earth. There will be terrible battle among all people of the world. The sea will become red. The earth and the bottom of the sea will be strewn with bones. The nations and the states will be scattered. The human species would be extinct. Such hunger, disease and crime, as never seen before, will prevail in the world. The filthy roads will be covered with crowds wandering from one place to another. The entire world will be devastated and there will be only night and death and screaming of some innocent people.

The scream implies an anguished enthusiasm for changing the world. But how can we do it? What can we do to make the world a better place? What can we do to put an end to all the misery and exploitation? There is an answer ready at hand. We can do it by eliminating hatred that we have for the fellow beings. For that we do not need to strive to discover some golden rules; rather we have to turn to our true nature. Our true nature is really innocent and possesses great love and warmth for other human beings and, in fact, for the entire universe. All we need to do is to clean our conscience and nature from the filthy ideas and concepts that generate abhorrence and hatred. As Martin Luther King Jr. had said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." And a similar dictum came from Buddha, "Those who attempt to conquer hatred by hatred are like warriors who take weapons to overcome others who bear arms. This does not end hatred, but gives it room to grow. But, ancient wisdom had advocated a different timeless strategy to overcome hatred. This eternal wisdom is to meet hatred with non-hatred. The method of trying to conquer hatred through hatred never succeeds in overcoming hatred. But, the method of overcoming hatred through non-hatred is eternally effective. That is why that method is described as eternal wisdom."

Russia's Strategic Priorities, Viewed from Within

By: Carl Bildt

While the European Union gears up for new leadership this fall, and while US President Donald Trump has just launched his 2020 re-election campaign, Russian President Vladimir Putin is sitting steady in the saddle with a mandate stretching to 2024. But what, exactly, does Putin intend to do with his next five years in the Kremlin?

Like leaders of all major powers, Russia's elite must regularly try to divine the future, in order to shape the country's strategic priorities in a way that anticipates likely challenges. The United States conducts such assessments every four years under the direction of the National Intelligence Council; the EU does so every five years, and has just published a semi-independent study of likely global trends between now and 2030.

In Russia's case, geostrategic forecasting is one of the activities of the semi-official Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations (MEMO), which has published a global outlook for 2035. Generally speaking, its assessment of future trends is similar to that of the US and the EU. Where the report gets interesting is in its appraisal of the implications for Russia. The authors identify several strategic dilemmas the country will face.

For example, according to the report, Russia's top priority is "preserving and improving its position in the world hierarchy of powers and responsibility." But achieving that will require a "structural reconstruction of the Russian economy." That is, without far-reaching economic reforms - or what the authors describe as "radical changes" - Russia's international standing will almost certainly decline. The same point is made with great force in Anders Åslund's acclaimed book *Russia's Crony Capitalism*.

Following the discussion of Russia's economic plight, which is no small matter, the report addresses a number of complicated geostrategic issues. The authors expect an "inevitably long political conflict with the West in connection with Russia's role in the post-Soviet space, first of all in defining the future of Ukraine and neighboring territories." In the near term, they conclude that such tensions will make it necessary for Russia to turn to China and the East.

The implication is that the authors see no possible resolution to the conflicts that Russia has created in its attempts to undermine its immediate neighbors' sovereignty. The study simply takes for granted that the Kremlin will continue to pursue revanchist policies abroad, despite the obvious negative impact its aggressive behavior had on Russia's international standing and domestic economy. It is as though Russia's illegal incursions into Georgia

and Ukraine are mere historical matters, admitting of no solution in the present.

As for moving closer to China, this has been a hallmark of the Kremlin's foreign policy at least since Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 provoked Western sanctions. Already this year, Putin has paid a visit to Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, and Xi has met with Putin in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The problem, as the MEMO study shows, is that pursuing closer cooperation with China is not really a viable option for ensuring Russia's long-term development. "In the long run," the authors point out, "cooperation with China and other Asia-Pacific countries cannot become a strategic alternative to cooperation with the West." Accordingly, the authors believe the Kremlin should be directing its efforts toward "working out its own agenda for possible active cooperation with" Europe and the US.

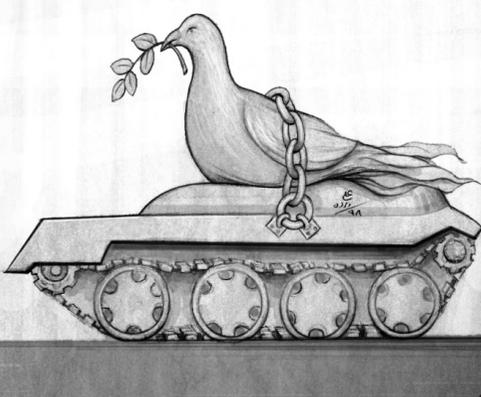
The upshot, then, is that Russia has not only failed to modernize as it should; it has also enmeshed itself in regional conflicts that have precipitated a crisis with the powers upon which its own development depends. This has forced Russia to rely ever more on China, even though it knows that becoming a junior partner to its eastern neighbor is not a desirable way forward. One way or another, Russia must find a way to restore relations with the West. This cannot happen immediately, given that the conflict in Ukraine remains a live issue; but it must be on the long-term agenda.

The obvious solution to the dilemma - admit that the conflict with Ukraine was a huge strategic mistake, and seek an honest settlement - was probably beyond the mandate of a study like this.

The question, of course, is whether Putin himself takes MEMO studies seriously, or even reads them at all. I sincerely doubt it. Most likely, shorter-term security assessments are what command his attention. Nonetheless, it is notable that a respected semi-official institution with strong support among influential members of the Russian elite has produced such a report. Though its language is often cautious and obscure, it is a clear critique of Putin's entire approach to foreign policy.

Moreover, the MEMO is absolutely correct: Russia has created a situation in which its global standing might well deteriorate. Continued conflicts with its neighbors at the expense of its relationship with the West will inevitably prevent it from pursuing economic modernization and development. And without a strong economic foundation, it will have no chance of securing a respectable "position in the world hierarchy of powers and responsibility" that Putin seems to find so important.

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