

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



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Government Requires a Clear Strategy against Insurgency

The security situation in Afghanistan is extremely serious and unfortunately the arrangements to tackle the situation are not up to the mark. The government authorities do not see eye to eye with each other regarding the security situation and the measures to control it. As there is no guideline or consensus on the higher level, the operational teams are not sure about what sort of steps they have to take. In most of the cases, they respond only after the insurgents attack somewhere. They, in short, have only a defensive mechanism to follow.

The security situation in the country demands that there should be a comprehensive strategy. The complex networks of the terrorists and their growth and expansion cannot be eradicated only through defensive approach. The security authorities must develop an approach where they are able to press the insurgents and bring them to the point where they understand that there is no solution through violence and terrorism and they should come to negotiation table. Without being dominated by the Afghan security forces, it is very difficult that Taliban insurgents get ready for any sort of negotiation.

The confused and incoherent security arrangements by the government, at a time when the country is going through the most challenging security situation, have been criticized by different analysts. They have said that though the government has made several promises over the past six months to eliminate insurgents and clear areas under their control, the presence of militants and their activities reveal that Kabul's security plans are mostly symbolic.

They have highlighted how the government has failed to fulfill its promises it had made for the improvement of security. Particularly, they have highlighted the government's response after the fall of Kunduz last year. Though President Ghani had said, "My order, the decision of the National Security Council is the full clearance [of Kunduz]. The security forces' achievements should be maintained. Therefore, we should not go back to the strategy of one step forward and two steps back or two steps forwards and four steps back."

However, the security situation in Kunduz shows that the insurgents have started taking controls of certain parts of the province again, while the strategy of the government to counter them or clear the province fully from them does not seem to be present. Kunduz MPs say that Ghani's promises are deceiving and that security has not improved in Kunduz. Fatima Aziz, an MP from Kunduz has said, "Nothing has been done to ensure the safety of Kunduz's residents. We hope that the national unity government should not deceive Kunduz residents anymore."

Sources in Kunduz that do not want to be named have said that Taliban have established strong bases in the province and that they are mostly operating on the outskirts of Kunduz city and in parts of Chahardara, Dasht-e-Archi and Qala-e-Zal districts. Government has control only over centers of the districts, the sources said. Recently, government itself confirmed that nine districts are under the control of Taliban, but reports reveal that no steps have been taken to clear the areas.

This is the situation in a province that was overtaken by Taliban and it brought a bad name to Afghan security arrangements. Now, there are threats that the province may once again fall to Taliban if there are no proper security arrangements but there is no evident strategy to deal with the situation and government does not seem very serious about the issue. Same is the case with other parts of the country. There are many provinces in the country that were once far away from insurgency but now they are seriously threatened by Taliban. However, the most disturbing fact is that there is no clear strategy with the government to deal with the situation. Since, Afghan security forces have shouldered the responsibility of security, they have faced serious challenges. There is no doubt in the fact that they have the capability to defeat the insurgents, but the problem is the lack of a comprehensive and practicable strategy. The higher ranks of the government and security personnel themselves are not sure about how to handle the situation. Their overall stance against insurgency is non-coherent and lack a true vision. They are not sure where they want to go; whether they want a negotiation with Taliban through military offensive so that the insurgents are compelled to come to negotiation table or they want to adopt a defensive mechanism only to respond after the attacks of the insurgents.

Moreover, they are not sure about how to coordinate the different fights that are taking place in different parts of the country. The insurgency in the country has turned complex, with ISIS posing even more threats. The different Taliban factions have different ways of fighting with the government. And, the main issue in such circumstances is that different authorities themselves are not on the same page on how to face the situation. Therefore, the government needs to design a clear strategy, involve all the authorities in the decision-making and improve the coordination. Only a clear, united and well-coordinated approach can defeat the insurgents in today's situation.

Intercultural Dialogue Crucial in Preventing and Ending Cultural Conflicts

By Mohammad Zahir

Thinking as a global citizen there are a lot of new opportunities and threatening issues to global peace process that must be consciously dealt with. One of the common raised problems is clash of cultures. To be better understood, first, culture itself is considered as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group and that it encompasses, in addition to arts and literature, lifestyle, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs. In fact, human relationships occur not only between individuals and that they cannot be circumscribed by relationships between states. They happen between groups with values, norms, models, behaviours, and ways of representing others that are more or less formalized in institutions. Relations between human groups thus carry huge cultural weight. Traditionally these relationships have been bounded by geographical limits, even if human history has also been built out of distant relationships and an expanding segment of the "elites" has been in continuous exchange with foreign cultures. The rapid evolution of transport and communication has brought the globalization of cultural flows. Today the media, even more than transport and elite mobility, play a growing role in interactions between societies and cultures. In this context, the large media conglomerates are persistently criticized from those in other cultures who see them as instruments for promoting the success of western values and ways of understanding and establishing a profoundly unequal "dialogue."

The cultural diversity can be threats and sources of hatred, and also it can be opportunities for global peace and cultural enrichment through mutual understanding and equal intercultural dialogues. But unfortunately, the peaceful relations among peoples and nations are threatened in the contemporary world by alienation, misconceptions, lack of respect, exclusion, marginalization and ignorance of other cultures, traditions, beliefs and history. In addition, tensions and dangerous acts of violence have arisen due to essentialist approaches to religions and civilizations, mutual fears, stereotyping and preconceived ideas, perceptions of injustice, use of double standards, disregard for international law, and situations of occupation and oppression. Is it highly important to have a common understanding of cultures especially between people of different cultures? On something so closely linked to values, can a discussion lead to realistic proposals for balanced relationships between societies and cultures as globalization creates new interfaces between them? Can we do justice to the economic dimension of culture and the concrete political consequences of its fundamental role for all societies? Could the main challenge of globalization be finding ways to organize relations between societies defined through different cultures and different, evolving cultural entities that go well beyond existing economic or interstate frameworks? It is the right times to raise the important questions of our time: how are we

prepared to understand other cultures? How well our children are trained to be acceptable citizens for global village? Does Western cultures perceive our culture? Do media productions, newspapers and cinemas follow the right policy leading to global peace? Unfortunately, the answer is largely negative; however, there are some achievements!

Developing international strategies for the modern world to becoming a secure home to people from diverse cultures inclusion of all philosophies is a vital need. In the other words, inclusive intercultural dialogue is a crucial strategy to peace-building. Indeed, Intercultural dialogue as a means of conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peace-building could only be truly effective if all concerned parts are included. And it is important to notify that no cultural dialogue can succeed when inequalities are too great or when it is controlled by the most powerful. In addition, promoting cultural pluralism as a defence tool to individual and collective freedom respecting universal values is a great milestone experienced yet. The major elements are summarized as following:

1) It calls first for the recognition of the strategic dimension of relations between geo-cultural entities in a globalized world. If we admit that security is an issue that not only concerns individuals and the physical territory of states, but that it also has fundamental cultural dimensions, geo-cultural issues should be dealt with the same importance as geo-politics geo-economics. Shouldn't geo-cultural entities, largely absent from the current international system, play a role similar to the one assumed by "regional entities" for certain kinds of international issues, and can be areas of privileged cultural exchanges?

2) Because geo-cultural entities do not necessarily overlap states, and because what is at issue for culture and identity is not simply private, we need to create a new place between societies and cultures that is irreducible both to the present international system and to the market. It could be a regime adapted to the specific conditions of cultural exchanges and that would try to reconcile the needs of the logic of identities with the logic of markets, by adopting measures coming out of 5 principles governing such a regime: managed market opening, multi-functionality, precautionary principle, responsibility and reciprocity.

3) Because the interstate system is no longer sufficient to deal with geo-cultural issues, it is necessary to conceive a new kind of political body, for conservation, proposition and supervision, open to different actors concerned by cultural dialogues and who will try to reconcile their interests to establish, by co-decision and co-regulation, in a place where they will have to assume their respective responsibilities. Such a World Council of Cultures (WCC) would be the counterpart of the Security Council as well as of the Social and Economic Council.

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Masterminding Attacks behind the Scene

By Hujjatullah Zia

Although terrorist groups maximize the level of threat against the entire region, Afghanistan bears the brunt of terrorism in the Asia. The escalation of militancy with the Taliban's "Omari Operation" and emergence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have left our nation at the mercy of violence and bloodshed more than ever before. The Taliban, who are emotionally hurt with the death of Omar's successor Mullah Akhtar Mansour, will seek to take revenge.

Since the Taliban group in Afghanistan has recently issued a statement for the Central Asian countries amid concerns that the ongoing violence in Afghanistan could destabilize the Central Asian States, the overwhelming militancy will spill over into the region. Insisting on group's policies to refrain from interfering in other countries' internal affairs, the Taliban say that their policy towards other nations is based on 'Do not harm nor accept harm' which has been repeatedly announced in the statements by the Islamic Emirate as well as in the Eid messages of its leader.

The statement by the Taliban group comes as there are concerns certain militant groups are attempting to infiltrate into the Central Asian countries by expanding their terrorist activities in Afghanistan.

The leaders of the States are mainly concerned regarding the attempts made by the loyalists of the ISIL terrorist group to expand foothold and operations in Afghanistan and the region.

In the meantime, the Afghan officials are saying that foreign insurgents belonging to the regional countries, including Pakistan and Tajikistan, are fighting along with the other militant groups in Afghanistan. As a result, the Afghan Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah talked about the terrorists' sanctuaries in the neighborhood during his speech at the NATO Warsaw summit in Poland. Seemingly, he was pointing towards the safe havens used by the Taliban group and Haqqani terrorist network leadership councils in Pakistan. "Looking back at recent history, some of us failed to grasp, the strategy that enabled the reemergence of militant cells that enjoyed sanctuaries and staging grounds in our neighborhood," he remarked. Thanking for NATO's contribution, he said that Afghanistan was on the frontlines against various types of threats, including Taliban, ISIL and Al-Qaeda, and the mutual partnership mattered to Afghan people.

However, the US Department of State said Monday that the bordering regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan were still safe havens for many terrorist groups. Wherever the Taliban's sanctuaries are, they have inflicted heavy casualties upon Afghan nation and threaten to continue so. The graph of combatants and non-combatants' death toll have increased to a high level within the two past years despite the Afghans' determined efforts to bring the

Taliban elements to the negotiating table. The Taliban constantly fouled the game and never decreased their terrorist acts in the country - which reflects their mala fide intention.

The Taliban's deadly attack on Afghan soldiers' convoy on June 30, which left dozens of soldiers dead and wounded, demonstrates two facts: first, Haibatullah Akhundzada will follow his predecessor's footsteps - as Mansour called peace talks as "enemy's propaganda" and continued staging attacks against Afghan and US soldiers. Therefore, a one-sided search for talks will not bear the desired result. Secondly, he intends to have the upper hand over his predecessor and gain the charisma of the Taliban's founder Mullah Omar. Therefore, he plans attacks behind the scene and never presents in the media either. He also seems relentless and stubborn, the same as Mullah Omar, in staging attacks against the US and Afghan soldiers. Although his photo leaked to media he intends to play the role of Omar and moves very cautiously not to fall the victim of the US drone. In a nutshell, Mansour's sudden death has unnerved Akhundzada and he will not dare come out of smoke screen - his deputies are likely to give him the same advice repeatedly.

The question is that will Akhundzada gain the charisma of Mullah Omar? It is believed that since Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mullah Yaqoob, the son of the founding emir Mullah Omar, have been appointed as his deputies, he gains the upper hand over Mansour, whose appointment was very controversial and led to splinter group. His appointment, however, brought the Haqqani network and the Taliban elements closer. But on the other hand, the caliphate of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the emergence of his people in Afghan-Pak border challenge his position - as the US officials referred to it as "ISIL-K" and believed that it "composed primarily of former members of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban."

It is believed that Haibatullah intends to play the role of Mullah Omar rather than Mansour. In other words, since he is a radical clergyman, he assumes the mantle of Mullah Omar and stage attacks from behind the veil against Afghan and US forces. So, he is a real obstacle before the peace talks and should be doomed to Mansour's fate.

To mitigate the militancy in Afghanistan, the US and Afghan officials will have to foil the militants' intelligence collection and enhance their own intelligence services besides military actions. It should be noted that the diplomatic way, urging for peace talks, has been proved abortive, what if the military deal fails? Won't it be a bitter pill to swallow? To bring the militants to their knees, both defensive and offensive strategies should be taken with great force.

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