

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



July 24, 2018

## Religious Peace Building: Could it break the Dead lock in Afghanistan Peace Process?

Historically religion has been used or mobilized to promote either conflict or peace building in different regions and countries. Religion may have not been the principal cause of conflict, even when the opposing groups, are differentiated by religious identities. However, religion has long been, and may continue to be, a contributing factor in some violent conflicts, whether in its own right or as a proxy for political battles, in different parts of the world including the Middle East, the Balkans, Sudan, Indonesia, and Syria.

Religious activists involved in peace building stress the fact that "religion, unfortunately, is often the most evident difference between rival groups and, as a result, regularly is blamed for conflicts. It is crystal cut that religion may, be instrumentalized or become a mask for violence and conflict. As studies have shown, many recent violent conflicts also have involved religious beliefs themselves.

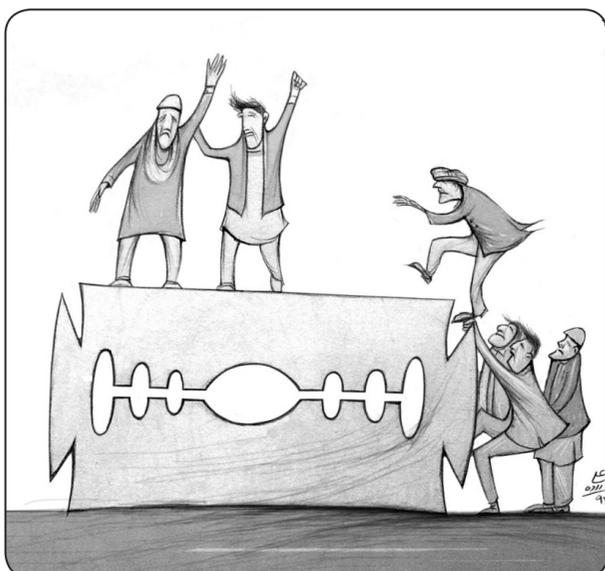
Government of Afghanistan has taken several initiatives with support of the other Islamic countries to further involve the Islamic scholars in the peace process of Afghanistan in order to put an end to the prolong conflict in the country. These initiatives include Ulema summit in Kabul on July 4, 2018, that they issued a fatwa in accordance with Islamic teachings about the ongoing conflict and peace. According to this fatwa the current war in Afghanistan is completely illegitimate and explosions, suicide, violence and extremism have no place in Islam. The second initiative was the Ulema conference in Jakarta which was conducted from March 15-19, 2018 including religious scholars from Afghanistan, Indonesia and Pakistan hosted by Indonesia, aimed at seeking a solution to the imposed war in Afghanistan. And, the two-day International Ulema Conference for Peace and Security in Afghanistan conducted from 9-11 July, 2018 in Saudi Arabia. At the end of the summit, Islamic scholars issued a declaration and called on the Taliban to denounce violence and come to the peace talks table.

### Paradox of Involving religion in conflict resolution and peace building in Afghanistan

There are serious conflicting debates on whether to involve religion in peace building in Afghanistan or not. Some analysts state that such approaches will add up to the religious legitimacy of the Taliban and other terrorist groups in the country. Further, they will pay no attention to such fatwas; they emphasize that the Taliban and other armed groups in Afghanistan pursue political and strategic goals and misuse the Islamic teachings to legitimize their deeds and use the Islamic teachings as a tool to ensure such goals. They emphasize that the Afghan conflict from an internal perspective has ethnic and political aspects and at the external level, it has intelligence, political and economic aspects. As a result, giving a religious identity to current conflict in Afghanistan only empower and legitimize the theory of the Taliban and other terrorist groups in the country.

On the other hand, Taliban accuses such moves as legitimizing the presence of infidel invaders in Afghanistan and term them as "deceptive" efforts aimed at presenting "the sacred jihad" against the foreign "occupation" as "unlawful." They warn the religious scholars that, "Do not afford an opportunity to the invading infidels in Afghanistan to misuse your name and participation in this conference as means of attaining their malicious objective."

What shall be lauded here is that according to some social scholars, "the most fanatical and cruelest political struggles are those that have been colored, inspired and legitimized by religion. In other words, "when conflicts are couched in religious terms, they become transformed in value conflicts. Unlike other issues, such as resource conflicts, which can be resolved by pragmatic and distributive means, value conflicts have a tendency to become mutually conclusive or zero-sum issues. They entail strong judgments of what is right and wrong, and parties believe that there cannot be a common ground to resolve their differences. As a result, the Afghan government shall be very cautious not to provide an opportunity to the Taliban and other terrorist groups to be religiously legitimized in the eye of the people because in that case the current conflict would become mutually conclusive or zero-sum issue in the country.



## Divergences and Convergences of Two Policing Cultures: Afghan Police and Taliban Police

By Upendra Baghel

With the expressed interest of United States of America (USA referred as US) to participate in direct talks with Taliban, which is a remarkable shift in US policy, there is new hope and possibility of the Afghan Government joined by key partners including US to start peace negotiation with Taliban. Taliban were overthrown in 2001 and since then, the Afghan Government supported by international forces has been at loggerheads with them for seventeen years. Whenever offers were made to Taliban for peace talks, at least since 2015, they insisted to hold talks with US directly, not with the Afghan Government. Consistently, they have been insisting on the withdrawal of foreign forces and the Secretary of State, Pompeo has already said that, 'the US is ready to discuss the role of international forces'. Continued fighting and insurgency in the country has taken heavy toll of all sides and fractured Afghan society and its infrastructure. Afghan Government and Taliban should not miss this opportunity, so that the people of Afghanistan can be at peace.

From 2001 to June 2017, the US alone spent \$74 billion on newly established armed forces and police. In addition to US efforts, other international partners also incurred heavy expenditure. Now armed forces are capable of defending the nation and safeguarding people. But, Taliban are also skillful of penetrating into the country's security to continue their activities of insurgent attacks. They are emboldened and capable of striking even at vital installations including the Ministry of Interior. Any number of security belts, safety cordons, heavily fortified T wall systems and national and international condemnations have not deterred them to attempt to carry out their attacks except forcing them to change tactics and engaging with security forces before reaching the target.

General Nicholson, the Commander of US forces in Afghanistan, made the announcement that the move was intended to bring the Afghan government and the Taliban closer and culminate in formal peace negotiations to end the long-running war. International Crisis Group has expressed that, '...wider peace deal, likely including national and local power-sharing arrangements, security sector reform and a process for rewriting the Afghan constitution'.

Both, the Afghan government and the Taliban are too divergent in their political philosophies, governance models and policing cultures. The real challenge will be to negotiate a common path to usher the country towards peace, security and development. Sustainable peace, whose kick off largely dependson the security institutions, can only ensure institutionalization of governance structures and uninterrupted economic activities.

During the Taliban regime of 1995 - 2001, their governance was rudimentary and fundamentalist. It was a Pashtun dominated government. Some of the salient features of their political philosophy and governance are summarized as follows. They had direct control over urban areas and major roads and left rural areas for the local leaders to control. They made efforts to impose a strict interpretation of sharia across the country. Ministers and deputies were mullahs with madarasa education. The decision makers avoided talking to non-muslim foreigners. Employment of women was forbidden except in few areas. Girl education was restricted. Women were ordered to be in burqa, not to travel alone and always accompanied by a marham or a blood relative. All senior non-Pashtun officials were replaced. General elections are incompatible with Sharia and therefore they did not believe in political parties and elections. Mullah Omar, as Amir al Mu'minin was the highest authority, not the head of state and all decisions were based on his advise.

There is not much known of their policing doctrine but it is clear that the police was driven by religious needs and it was oriented towards-social and religious controls adhering to sharia. It was a fundamental Islamic theological state with all police personnel in beard. One resident of Kabul recalls, 'Taliban were very clear and serious in policing. They had several branches with separate line of command. They had internal policing through 'secret police' to gather people perspective

on their governance and to keep check on senior government officials and others for their conduct and honesty and threats to their regime. There was a Department of Vice and Promotion of Virtues to enforce religious norms on all. They were serious in implementing directions/orders. They would not leave for regular meals unless they finish assigned work. Their justice delivery was quick and they followed deterrence and fear model where sentences were executed in public.' Another resident says that he was detained in police station till he got fist-length beard and his father was ordered to deliver food to him. Their policing was extremely harsh and it was in gross violations of universally accepted principles of human rights and international obligations of Afghanistan. After seventeen years of freedom and liberty in the country, on account of inability to cope up with public expectations and lack of efficient and effective policing, some Afghans reflect upon and claim that the Taliban system was better: no theft, no corruption and minimum needs.

The present Afghanistan is a multi ethnic Islamic modern state: a democratic state with presidential form of governance following the constitutionalism through institutional and functional structures. Criminal justice system follows the principles of rehabilitative and correctional theories of justice. Constitution of Afghanistan and Afghan Police Law empower the police to maintain order, discover crimes and support Attorney General in crimes investigations. Within these constitutional and legal frameworks, Afghan police is conceptualized but the process of its development and institutionalization is still continuing.

Taliban claim that presently they are not a group but they are the government of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Their governance has been providing secure and just Islamic governance in areas of their control and they have capacity of good governance delivering services including public services, welfare and justice and security. They also engage at the international level. They counter UNAMA reports on civilian casualties describing them as 'one sided' and release their own versions. Mostly, armed Taliban are bearded with no uniform. They are well trained and heavily armed. This shows as self-claimed that Taliban have changed their governance model. But, still there are contrasts.

Whenever a peace deal is negotiated and signed then in the last it hinges on power sharing, integrations of forces, militia and supporters, disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation programs and accountability mechanisms through criminal justice system. The same may be expected in Afghanistan. It happened in many countries where peace deals were signed, including in Rwanda, Angola and South Sudan.

Police in Afghanistan is already under transformation stage where efforts are undergoing to restructure, reform and professionalize. It has not developed and imbibed its core philosophy as a law enforcement professional police institution, as it has become a de-facto extension of military for counter insurgency operations.

Divergences are more than convergences between these two policing cultures. Power sharing and possibly, integration of several thousands of Taliban supporters with divergent mindsets may necessitate Afghan National Police and Ministry of Interior to face more structural and operational challenges. Policing doctrine has to be adapted to new realities and policing reform may get more perplexed, confused, derailed or delayed unless all aspects are agreed upon. The process could be smoothed and the confusions could be avoided, if the Ministry starts conceptualizing the post negotiation policing and embarks upon developing its strategy to lead negotiations on core aspects of policing and police structure.

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## From Brexit to Breferendum

By Anatole Kaletsky

If something is impossible, it does not happen. If a country votes to make two plus two equal five, this "democratic decision" will eventually be overridden by the rules of arithmetic, no matter how large the majority or how loudly "The People have spoken." This is the story now playing out in Britain as Theresa May's government stumbles toward the final act of the Brexit tragedy-comedy.

In 2016, the British people voted to leave the European Union while keeping "the exact same benefits" they enjoyed as EU members. David Davis, May's former minister responsible for negotiating Brexit with the EU, used that phrase repeatedly in Parliament, and it was then taken up enthusiastically by May herself. The promises by former foreign secretary Boris Johnson, the chief Brexit campaigner, were even more fulsome: Britons would have complete freedom to live, work, and study throughout Europe; untrammelled access to the EU single market; and full participation in whatever political institutions a post-Brexit government might feel like cherry-picking from the EU orchard. In short, the 2016 referendum was a vote for two plus two equals five. The consequences of this self-delusion are now becoming obvious, as Britain's government finds itself unable to get a parliamentary majority for any realistic Brexit plan. If this situation persists, Britain will have only one alternative: another referendum to reconsider the impossible result of the 2016 vote.

The Times now estimates that there is a 50% probability of such a referendum. When Justine Greening, one of May's recently sacked cabinet ministers, became the first senior Conservative to propose this option, the objections raised to it were no longer about the principle of a second referendum, but about the difficulty of deciding the right question and method of casting votes.

A new referendum is rising to the top of Britain's political agenda because of the self-defeating behavior of the Conservative Party's hardline Brexiters. When Davis and Johnson resigned from May's cabinet, chaotic parliamentary rebellions - from both the Euroskeptical and pro-European factions of the party - ensued. As a result, the main opposition Labour Party now sees a realistic chance of bringing down May's government and triggering a general election by uniting with either hardline Brexiters or pro-European Conservative rebels to kill whatever Brexit plan May ultimately puts to Parliament. Labour opposition makes every Brexit option almost certain to be blocked.

Start with the threat of a "no deal" rupture, whereby Britain would crash out of the EU with no agreement at all on a new relationship. This is now totally implausible, because all of Britain's opposition parties, plus the clear majority of Conservative MPs whose primary loyalty is to business interests, would block it.

Almost as improbable is a "hard Brexit," in which Britain and Europe agree to an orderly separation, but with no preferential arrangements for future trade. This, too, would be voted down by all the opposition parties, along with dozens of centrist Conservatives. Some of the Brexit hardliners also would oppose any such agreed separation, because it

would force Britain to pay a large EU exit fee and to follow European rules for an open border with Ireland, in exchange for no commercial privileges at all.

May's latest plan for a more cooperative "soft Brexit" now also faces insuperable opposition from Johnson and Davis, plus several dozen followers. These hardliners have denounced May's new plan as "Brexit in Name Only" and a plot to turn Britain into an EU "vassal state." Labour is now willing to enter an unholy alliance with them in the hope of precipitating a government collapse.

This leaves one final option: a parliamentary rebellion to stop Brexit. "Exit Brexit" is the official policy of the Liberals, the Greens, and the Scottish National Party. But all serious Brexiters, plus the vast majority of Conservative MPs and the Labour leadership, who feel obliged to follow the "instructions" of the 2016 referendum obviously will not support this option.

If May finds herself unable to muster a parliamentary majority for any version of Brexit, resignation and a general election will not be her only recourse. One goal unites all the Conservative factions, regardless of their views on Europe: to avoid a general election and the risk of Labour winning power. This means that May could attach a referendum proposal to her preferred version of Brexit, justifiably claiming that Parliament's response to the 2016 referendum should either be ratified or rejected by another popular vote. The criminal investigations launched recently into illegal spending by Johnson's official Leave campaign, and allegations of Russian funding for former UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage's parallel campaign further justify a final referendum.

The Labour leadership would probably oppose a new referendum, because it would derail their efforts to force a general election. But, crucially, the Liberals and Scottish Nationalists would enthusiastically support a referendum as long as it offered voters the option of keeping Britain in the EU. As a result, May would have no trouble assembling a parliamentary majority for a legislative package that bundled her Brexit plan with a referendum to decide between it and the status quo alternative of remaining in the EU.

Logic suggests that such a referendum would reverse the 2016 decision to leave the EU, because any specific Brexit proposal presented by the government would be far less attractive than the utopian delusions that managed to secure only a narrow majority two years ago. But, by next year, the British people could be so angry with Europe that they vote Leave again. If so, Brexit could go ahead on whatever terms May negotiates, and nobody could complain about the consequences or costs.

Whatever the outcome, voters would have made an honest choice between genuinely and properly articulated options. That would be true democracy, instead of the demagoguery of two plus two equals five.

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