

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



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## Illiteracy and Our Social Setup

Literacy has a key role in today's world where different countries have excelled in the field of education, research and discovery. The countries that have been able to value literacy and made efforts to promulgate it universally have been able to make huge strides in almost all the fields of life. In fact, they are the countries that lead the world, not only in education and research but also in politics and economy. They are the true leaders of the world. However, the countries that have not been able to do so are suffering because of backwardness and underdevelopment.

Afghanistan is one of the countries where illiteracy has remained a dominant problem for many decades. And this problem is generating and invigorating many other problems as well.

There are many problems that can be solved with little effort and consideration; however, because of ignorance they have become unsolvable. When the people of a country are not able to understand what they want and what they don't, it is really difficult to solve their problems.

In most of the remote areas of our country there are still many people who consider getting education as a crime. On the other hand, there are the residents of the cities who are convinced that education is inferior to wealth as they witness the failures of the educated men and the success of the ignorant rich people. In this way the value of education is getting lower and the higher values of life are facing great loss.

The main reason of this scenario is our social setup, wherein, education is considered useless and the ways to success and prosperity are on the opposite direction to that of education. In fact, our people have not yet learnt how to live like the developed and free countries of the world. Therefore, they as a nation are not able to choose a better life style and social practices for themselves. As a matter of fact, such a quality can only be attained when they know the true meaning of free thinking and true knowledge.

They, without a tinge of doubt, do not know what their real requirements or demands are and what factors can lead them to success. There have been many occasions when they have neglected the welcomes of modernity and development. Whenever, there have been efforts even from the government to pursue modern education and better social and political decisions, they have tried to oppose them and push the country towards conservatism.

Because of the prevailing ignorance most of the people in the country cannot even think about a prosperous society, wherein all the citizens have their due rights. They even do not know that there are certain countries in the world that have most of the facilities of life and they have developed so much that now they have reached to skies to discover them. However, the situation in our country is so that if a clergy announces that man is mortal and he can never reach to the skies and the claims of the developed countries of the world are nothing than white lies, they will definitely believe him with respect and complete obedience.

Our people are alien to the industrial and scientific developments and on most of the cases they treat them with hypocrisy. There are many among us who basically take advantage of the scientific inventions and discoveries almost on daily basis but never hesitate to declare them incorrect and false. If they had the potential they would definitely take our society back to the Dark Ages.

Unfortunately, there are many so-called intellectuals in our society as well who spend their time and energy in favoring the conservative and fundamentalist ideas and strive to prove them right. Because of the issues and people mentioned above our society has become confused. One of the most dominating characters of our society is that it has made the people conservative and they have started praising their past more than their present.

They have started hating each other instead of disseminating the golden feelings of love and brotherhood. As noted by Maya Angelou, "We allow our ignorance to prevail upon us and make us think we can survive alone, alone in patches, alone in groups, alone in races, even alone in genders".

However, they need to understand that they have to be vigilant and understand that they are being fooled. Their thoughts are being confined and their emotions are being betrayed. They are being utilized in the name of religion and history. Now, they have to realize that their responsibilities are to declare clearly that they are no more ready to be fooled and to be utilized by others.

Their rights are to announce their hatred for ignorance, poverty, conservative ideas, slavish thinking and growing hypocrisy.

They need to fight against the prevailing injustice and all the efforts that try to keep them away from education and knowledge. They should say no to the darkness and try to follow the light as it is the only way that they can live their life with prosperity and dignity.



## The Deteriorating Diplomatic Ties

By Dilawar Sharzai

The weary war against terrorism brought with itself different sorts of influences and impacts on the lives of people in Afghanistan, South Asian region and U.S. in particular and the world in general. Even, bearing a lot of medals on its chest, this war is considered to have proved very much lethal in some other ways. The resources that have been used in this war have not been considered to have hit the bull's eye and the very reason for which the war was started is yet to be achieved even after sixteen years, when the involved nations of the world seem to be reluctant to continue the war and deciding to drag it towards a conclusion.

The most important pretexts to the war were to put an end to the terrorism in Afghanistan and help it build strong political and economic systems so that it can guarantee its survival on the modern concept of democracy. Both the pretexts are yet to be realized to full extent and the international security forces led by U.S. troops have already withdrawn. Neither the terrorist networks have been eradicated from the region, nor the political and economic systems in Afghanistan are standing on strong footings that can be left alone without much attention and support from international community.

The phenomenon of terrorism has the capacity to grow into strong position from where it is today and can really threaten the region and the world as a whole. Further, this phenomenon is no more an issue only in Afghanistan and has reached to the neighboring countries as well. Pakistan, in this regard, can be named specially.

The rise of terrorism in Pakistan has had close connections with the socio-political situation in Afghanistan and even if the situation in Afghanistan is made better in terms of peace and tranquility it is bound to be effected by the changes of phenomenon of terrorism in neighboring Pakistan unless it is dealt as a regional matter.

Moreover, the terrorists attacks in Pakistan is a threat by itself, as well.

The threat of terrorism remains real and intact.

On the other hand the democratization of the political system in Afghanistan is still immature and needs to go a long way before it can reach to a reliable position from where it can start a journey towards real democracy that can penetrate to the grass root level and can deal with the diversity existing in the country.

Further, any political agreement with Taliban still remains unattainable and do not seem very much optimistic. Include to all these concerns and ambiguities the un-

tamed corruption in the country that has been paralyzing the governance system and has been hindering the way of the funds and supports from international community to be spent for the welfare and betterment of the common people of Afghanistan. Rather, it has been transferring the money, in some way or the other to those who, directly or indirectly support Taliban and terrorist networks in the country. International community in this regard has shown concerns on various occasions but tangible measures that can really introduce strong system of accountability are yet to be introduced.

The economic system has not reached to the level of independence and serious investment and economic activities are yet to achieve confidence because of shaky situation of markets and the law and order situation.

One of the most important aspects of endeavors for a peaceful life in Afghanistan is its relations with the neighboring countries.

Currently, the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan is not going on proper tracks. The current situation that has come out of the recent terrorist's attack on Shrine in Pakistan's Sindh province will further deteriorate the situation.

Afghan ambassador in Islamabad Hazrat Umar Zakhelwal on Saturday asked government in Kabul to shift stranded Afghan nationals in Pakistan through aircraft back to the country. Pakistan closed the crossing points with Afghanistan on Durand line after terrorist attacks in the country last month.

Zakhelwal said he met foreign affairs advisor Sartaj Aziz over the issue and asked him to at least reopen the crossing points for people who have remained stranded.

He said he met Aziz today and demanded the reopening of the gate, adding the Pakistani official claimed the crossing points were open for people who want to go from Pakistan to Afghanistan.

Along with the cooperation and assistance of international community, the regional ties are also very important for Afghanistan to go through the transition period and to manage the affairs even after the withdrawal of international troops. Afghanistan has the challenge to maintain both and at the same time its own national interests and that is not an easy task.

Therefore, Afghan authorities have to be very serious in this regard and must leave no stone unturned in fulfilling their responsibilities with iron will and determination.

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## Realism About Trumpism

By Joschka Fischer

Little more than a month after US President Donald Trump's inauguration, it has become clear that nothing good will come of his presidency. Unfortunately, the pessimists turned out to be realists: things really are as bad as they said they would be. Worst-case scenarios are now baseline scenarios. Any hope that the demands of office, or political and economic realities, would persuade Trump to adhere to domestic and foreign-policy norms must now be cast aside as wishful thinking.

Realism demands acceptance of a sobering truth. When the 45th president of the United States must choose between upholding the US Constitution - which limits his authority through the separation of powers - or subverting it, he will likely choose the latter. The Trump administration intends to carry out nothing less than regime change in Washington, DC.

Sooner or later, friction between the president and the constitutional system will create a severe crisis that will rock the US to its core, and possibly leave it politically unrecognizable. Trump's continued attacks on the judiciary and the press - indispensable institutions for ensuring executive accountability - leave no room for a different interpretation.

Even if America's constitutional system prevails, the chaos that will ensue during Trump's presidency could cause permanent damage. Consider what might happen were a severe terrorist attack to occur in the US during this time of turmoil. Would the US experience a slide into authoritarianism, similar to what we have been witnessing in Turkey? One certainly hopes not, but it is a real possibility.

In terms of international relations, we have so far been spared an abrupt rupture of existing alliances and related commitments. But, as long as Trump pursues his "America first" strategy of isolationism and protectionism, those alliances and commitments will remain at risk.

A constitutional crisis in the US, a paradigm shift from globalization toward protectionism, and new isolationist security policies imply significant disruption of the international order, with no alternative order in view.

If things go well, persistent instability will prevail; if not, confrontation and even military conflict could become the norm. Trump's relationship with Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, remains unclear - if not downright mysterious. This ongoing uncertainty is particularly vexing for Eastern Europe, which cannot discount the possibility that Trump and Putin will reconcile their interests and stage Yalta 2.0, dividing Europe into separate spheres of influence.

The uncertainty with respect to Russia has been compounded by curious - and persistent - background noises in the Trump administration. Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, and Secretary of Defense James Mattis have all offered assurances to NATO and Eastern Europe; and Trump's Russia-friendly National Security Adviser, Michael Flynn, has resigned. And yet when this much smoke surrounds an issue, it's highly likely that something is burning.

In any case, as Trump shakes up the existing world order, Europe will bear the brunt of the shocks. After World War II, Western Europe was able to thrive because of two big American promises: military protection against the Soviet Union and free trade. The US also played a vital symbolic role as a "beacon of liberty." But now, with all of Europe increasingly threatened by Russian revanchism, that role may already be a thing of the past. Meanwhile, the European Union's severe, self-inflicted wounds have evidently left it too weak to develop an alternative to its crumbling status quo.

If Europe's post-war security and economic arrangements falter or break down, as now seems likely, the foundation on which a free Europe has rested will become unsound. In that case, the proximate cause will most likely be the second round of the French presidential election, on May 7. A victory for the far-right National Front's Marine Le Pen would cause the eurozone and the EU to disintegrate. France and other EU member states will suffer grave economic damage, and a global crisis will likely ensue. If she loses, the current nationalist wave would be broken, at least temporarily, giving Europe a second chance.

That chance, if it comes, must not be wasted. The EU urgently needs to develop the means to defend itself from both internal and external threats, stabilize the eurozone, and ensure calmness and rationality in the coming Brexit negotiations with the United Kingdom.

Whatever else changes, the UK's geopolitical and security interests will stay the same. Brexit will not alter the fact that cooperation is necessary for mutual defense, the fight against terrorism, and border protection.

To be sure, the EU must not accept anything that would endanger the remaining union of 27 member states.

But negotiators on both sides must also take care to avoid any outcome that could poison UK-EU relations indefinitely. As experience teaches us, life goes on, even after a divorce.

Our common interests will remain, and now they include managing the risks posed by America's truculent new president. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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