

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



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No End to Painful Sufferings

We will not sit idly by. For we have much to lose, so much to protect. And our rights, the rights of others, the very future of our planet cannot, must not, be thrown aside by these reckless political profiteers," these words were spoken by the UN human rights chief Zeid al Hussein.

Violation of human rights has been a highly challenging issue in the modern world as thousands of people, including women and children, are burning amidst war and violence. As a result of unmitigated insurgency, the fundamental rights of ethnic minorities have been denied and their freedoms are curtailed. Individuals, including Muslims, are targeted indiscriminately on the grounds of their faiths and beliefs.

The tension between Muslims and Buddhists is one of the highly challenging issues, which lingers up to now in Myanmar. On December 2016, former secretary-general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, visited Myanmar for talks with State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, regarding simmering tensions between Buddhists and Muslims in Rakhine State, on the western coast of the country.

Rohingya is home to one million displaced people, most belonging to the Rohingya community. It is one of the largest stateless populations in the world, in spite of their belief that they are indigenous to Rakhine. The Rohingya have been called the most persecuted people in the world - at this moment in time - and are denied Myanmar citizenship. Physical violence against them is common, with hundreds killed and thousands of houses belonging to them burned down since 2012. Reports of sexual abuse by the police and even the army have also been rife, with many Rohingya denied access to healthcare, means of employment and food. One hundred thousand people, Buddhists and Muslims, are estimated to be displaced as a result of the violence between the two groups. As a result, about 66,000 people have fled from Rakhine to Bangladesh since the army launched a security operation in response to attacks on police border posts on October 9, 2016.

The UN humanitarian office has put the figure at 69,000. Both sides are believed to seek a peaceful resolution to a conflict in one of the most ethnically complex countries in the world. The Rohingya believe they have as much right to Rakhine as the Buddhist community does. "Rohingya are not illegal immigrants because the Rohingya did not come to this country after its independence.

We are the indigenous citizens of this country," Abdul Rasheed, Chairman of the Rohingya Foundation, is quoted as saying. Historians debate whether the Rohingya were living in Myanmar pre-independence - when it was still known as Burma - in 1948. However, they have always lived primarily in Rakhine. But unlike many other ethnic groups - and there are hundreds of them, they were never considered part of the Myanmar's population. They were frequently denied the right to participate in elections and many considered them to be from neighboring Bangladesh, migrating to Myanmar after the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971.

Muslims bear the brunt of violence in Myanmar. Earlier, reports said that Myanmar's security forces had committed mass killings and gang rapes of Rohingya Muslims and burned down villages since October in a campaign, that likely amounts to crimes against humanity and possibly ethnic cleansing, according to the United Nations. "The 'area clearance operations' have likely resulted in hundreds of deaths," a report from the UN's human rights office said.

Zeid al Hussein expressed his deep concern in this regard and said that Aung San Suu Kyi promised to investigate the issue. However, the fact is that human rights are violated in the worst possible way in Myanmar and Muslims have been changed into sacrificial lamb.

The UN reported earlier that three children aged six or younger being "slaughtered with knives". Citing witness accounts, the rights office said, "An eight-month-old baby was reportedly killed while his mother was gang-raped by five security officers."

The tragic incidents and atrocity are highly outrageous and seem to overshadow ideologies practiced by some radical groups. In other words, the inhumane practices in Myanmar will shake one's conscience. No wonder, the humiliation of human rights and dignity is the root of much violence around the globe. For instance, terrorist groups pay no heed to human rights and humanitarian law.

Therefore, they trampled upon the dignity and liberty of people and created tension around the entire globe. Both the past and the present show that lack of religious tolerance on one hand and claiming racial superiority on the other, have led to indescribable violence. Human societies suffered from conflagration which rooted from the two aforementioned issues. Currently, the history repeats itself, mainly in Islamic societies, and radical figures target people under the aegis of religious terms.

It is believed that the current bleeding will never end unless men are tolerant to one another and accept one another as they are regardless of their race, color and creed. The international community is hoped to engage in Myanmar's issue so as to protect the human rights and dignity of the Myanmar people. Violent treatment and atrocity will deteriorate the situation through sparking off the sense of revenge.

Human societies will have to stop the history from repeating and the past bloodbath must be an eye-opener for the world.



Socio-economic Progress and Frustration

By Dilawar Sharzai

Capitalism has always been in controversy because it has been a class-based system. The presence of three major economic classes in the system has always kept the discussions among the economists and politicians very hot - few considering it the failure of system while others suggesting it to be the beauty of it. One of the major issues in the international economic crisis was the growing disparity among the different economic classes.

Though the ideal form of capitalism emphasizes meritocracy, its real form has not been able to achieve that.

Moreover, in the very beginning of the story, the marriage of democracy with capitalism was able to eradicate the strict lines drawn among different classes. It was the mobility through the classes that the system was readily acceptable and even today makes it acceptable if the mobility is maintained; however, today this mobility is being hindered and making many people uncomfortable.

Before, the discussion is further carried on a discussion about mobility would not be irrelevant. Mobility, or to be more accurate, social mobility means movement through different social positions.

This movement may be both horizontal and vertical. Horizontal mobility means movement from one position to another within the same social level, or moving between social groups having the same social status. On the other hand, vertical mobility means movement through social positions in a social hierarchy; suggesting movement either from a social level to a higher one or a lower one. Mobility is basically dependent to a great extent on the factors including economic capital, cultural capital, human capital, social capital, physical capital and symbolic capital. But among them the economic capital plays a dominant role and most of the others are intertwined in it.

The factors that influence mobility (mostly vertical mobility) to a large extent may differ from one society to another. The societies which are considered as the modern and developed societies have the mobility which is largely influenced by the factors like welfare, education, public transport and professional commitments. Whereas, the societies that are not very much developed and are considered comparatively backward have mobility that is greatly influenced by the factors like religious affiliations, caste membership, or simple geography.

Therefore, it is very easy to find strict social classes and less mobility among the social classes in the tribal societies and the societies that are largely influenced by religious extremism, or even the ones that have strict caste systems. To be very accurate one can say that the rules of mobility differ in different societies. This rule can be either based on Ascription or Achievement.

Achieved status is a position that is acquired because of merit, hard work or achievement. And a system that is based on such a rule is called as an open system. Within an open system individuals can move up or down in the social rankings based on the true principle of meritocracy.

On the other hand Ascribed status is a position based on who a person is, means it depends on a person's family background, caste or financial position. Ascribed status is basically found in closed sys-

tem and within a closed system the mobility becomes very difficult. So it suggests that the mobility through different social, or to put it in more accurate term, socio-economic classes guarantees more opportunities to the people to change their status. But if the mobility is decreased there are lesser chances that people change their social status.

Therefore, it may result in increase in frustration and deprivation. The lines among the classes become more vivid and the classes are further divided on the basis of their cultural and psychological aspects. Moreover, the classes with higher social ranking have more opportunities of getting an important part in political life and therefore participate in the decision making process of their societies. So, they most of the time get inclined towards using the power they enjoy because of their socio-economic status for the betterment of their own acquaintances and their own class, while the poor who do not have such support have to remain poor for many generations.

Modern democratic capitalist systems have to have swift mobility because unlike monarchy, feudalism or tribalism they are to be based on meritocracy.

Some of them are very open systems and make sure that mobility is swift in them, yet some of them are facing some problems in that regard. Western societies have been considered as the lands of opportunities. It has been believed in those societies any person can climb up the corporate ladder if he/she possesses the capability to do so. There have been many examples as well in that regard. Unfortunately, that trend has diminished to a large extent and the mobility is becoming harder.

The current protests against economic hardships that were carried out in different European countries and US had to something with the decreasing mobility and growing frustration.

No doubt there were many reasons behind the protests, among which the international economic crisis has been the main reason, but the decreasing mobility is further adding fuel to the fire. Most of the people do not understand the tough theories of economics and the different ideologies about different economic and political systems. What they understand is their own lives.

If they find themselves in a miserable condition, deprived of even their basic rights and experience their children also in the same conditions even after having the ability and going through hard work, they will be frustrated, and their frustration will further be strengthened by finding some of people having all the luxuries of life without the required ability and even without noticeable hard work.

Definitely, the modern democratic capitalist systems can not calm down the people unless they deal with the issue of mobility. They have to make sure that the mobility through different classes is smooth and it follows the concept of meritocracy.

They have to appreciate the Achieved status and develop a positive competition among the people and try to discourage Ascribed status as much as possible. Socio-economic classes must only serve as the variety in the society and must not become the root cause of discrimination of one class in the hand of the other ones; otherwise the result is frustration and demonstration.

Dilawar Sharzai is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at sajjad.aasim1982@gmail.com

The Three Trumps

By Jeffrey D. Sachs

Never in recent history has a change of leadership attracted as much attention and speculation as Donald Trump's rise to the US presidency. What this change signifies and what it portends requires unraveling three mysteries, because there are three versions of Trump.

The first Trump is the friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Trump's enthusiasm for Putin is the most consistent part of his rhetoric. Despite a worldview that regards the United States as a victim of foreign powers - China, Mexico, Iran, the European Union - Trump's ardor for Putin burns bright.

Depending on who is opining, Trump is either a naive admirer of strongmen like Putin or a long-time tool of Russian intelligence. There is almost surely a backstory here, one that could destroy Trump's administration if some of the lurid rumors are confirmed. We now know that some key dates and details in the infamous "dossier" on Trump's relations with Putin, assembled by a former British intelligence officer, have been verified.

A growing body of circumstantial evidence suggests that Trump has been backed by Russian money for decades. Russian oligarchs may have saved Trump from personal bankruptcy, and one reportedly traveled to a number of Trump's campaign stops, perhaps acting as a go-between with the Kremlin. And many top members of Trump's team - including his first campaign manager, Paul Manafort; recently-ousted National Security Adviser Michael Flynn; former ExxonMobil CEO and now Secretary of State Rex Tillerson; and hedge-fund magnate and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross - all have significant business dealings with Russia or Russian oligarchs.

The second version of Trump is a greedy businessman. Trump seems intent on transforming the presidency into another source of personal wealth. For most people, the presidency would seem to be its own reward, without cashing in (at least not while in office). Not for Trump. Contrary to all previous norms, and in violation of the standards set by the Office of Government Ethics, Trump is keeping his business empire, while family members maneuver to monetize the Trump name in new investments around the world.

The third Trump is a populist and demagogue. Trump is a non-stop font of lies, who brushes aside the inevitable corrections by the media with the charge of "fake news." For the first time in modern American history, the president is aggressively demonizing the press. This past week, the White House barred the New York Times, CNN, Politico, and the Los Angeles Times from a news briefing by the press secretary.

On some interpretations, Trump's demagoguery is in the service of his chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, who defends a dark vision of a coming war of civilizations. By raising fear to the highest possible level, Trump aims to create a violent America-first nationalism. Hermann Göring chillingly explained the formula from his Nuremberg jail cell after World War II: "[T]he people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country." Another theory is that all three Trumps -

friend of Putin, wealth maximizer, and demagogue - are really one: Trump the businessman has long been supported by the Russians, who have used him for years as a front for laundered money. One might say they won the jackpot, parlaying a small bet - on manipulating the outcome of an election they most likely never expected him to win - into a huge payoff. On this interpretation, Trump's attacks on the press, the intelligence agencies, and the FBI specifically aim to discredit these organizations in advance of further revelations regarding the Trump-Russia dealings.

Those of us who lived through Watergate remember how difficult it was to hold Richard Nixon to account. Without the revelation of secret White House tapes, Nixon almost surely would have escaped impeachment and served out his term. The same was true with Flynn, who lied time and again to the public, and to Vice President Michael Pence, about his communications with the Russian ambassador before he assumed his post. Yet, like Nixon, he was tripped up only because his lies were recorded, in this case by the US intelligence agencies.

When Flynn's lies were exposed, Trump's reaction, characteristically, was to attack the leak, not the lies. The main lesson of Washington, and indeed of strongman politics in general, is that lying is the first, not last, resort.

If Congress has enough honest members, a majority, knowing that Republicans will not police Republicans, will demand an independent investigation of Trump's Russia ties. Republican Senator Rand Paul was explicit on this point, declaring that it "makes no sense" for Republicans to investigate Republicans. Trump seems intent on turning up the pressure on the FBI, the intelligence agencies, the courts, and the media to back off.

Demagogues survive because of public support, which they try to maintain through appeals to greed, nationalism, patriotism, racism, and fear. They shower their supporters with short-lived cash, in the form of tax cuts and income transfers, paid for by running up the public debt and leaving the bill to future generations. Trump has so far kept America's plutocrats happy, through promises of unforgivable tax cuts, while mesmerizing his white working-class followers with executive orders to deport illegal immigrants and bar arrivals from Muslim-majority countries.

None of this has made Trump very popular. His approval ratings are historically low for a new president, around 40%, with roughly 55% of respondents disapproving. Judicial challenges to executive actions, fights with the media, tensions stemming from rising budget deficits, and new revelations regarding Trump and Russia, will keep the pot boiling - and Trump's public support could evaporate. In that case, Republican leaders are more likely to turn on Trump. But no one should ever underestimate a demagogue's willingness to use fear and violence - even war - to maintain power. And if Putin is indeed his backer and partner, Trump's temptations will be strong. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Jeffrey D. Sachs, Professor of Sustainable Development and Professor of Health Policy and Management at Columbia University, is Director of Columbia's Center for Sustainable Development and of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. His books include *The End of Poverty*, *Common Wealth*, *The Age of Sustainable Development*, and, most recently, *Building the New American Economy*.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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