

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



March 15, 2016

Maintaining Harmony in Diversity

A diverse society wherein people with different ethnic backgrounds and subcultures live, it is really difficult to maintain order and tranquility; in fact, it would require a great deal of tolerance and understanding to do so. It is important to see diversity with the perspective of richness of culture and tradition, instead of finding differences and making them the basis of tussles or wars.

All the cultures and subcultures have their particular contexts and it is really vital to comprehend them with the same contexts. The biased and ethno-centric approach towards others is bound to result in clashes and chaos. Such a scenario is really very much detrimental and can be utilized by others for their personal benefits. History approves the fact that the heterogeneous societies that have had clashes among their different groups were dominated by others who have not only strengthened those clashes through political means but have in fact pursued their own motives. In short, the societies that have such clashes are politically utilized by others and they suffer great loss as a result.

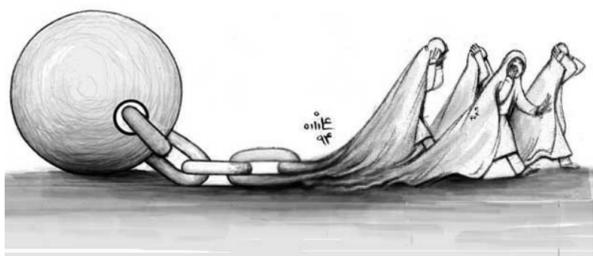
It is, therefore, essential for heterogeneous societies to develop a culture of co-existence. A sense of belongingness to a large body; may be a feeling for attachment to some national feelings, can solve the issue to a certain level. Binding themselves to national levels, the heterogeneous groups in the society may give up their trivial matters and start thinking in broader perspective. They have to be taught to understand that it is only through collective efforts that they can make their survival possible in today's society. Their collective efforts can turn into a synergy that will provide them the possibilities of facing the overgrowing challenges of life with success and dignity.

One of the best ways to coexist in a heterogeneous society is finding out the similarities among different groups instead of identifying the differences and making them the bone of contention. In fact, the similarities among different human groups are always more than the differences. One of the largest similarities among all the groups of human beings is that they are human beings and share the same earth to live on. However, such concepts have been only considered ideal and impracticable. In reality, human beings are divided into different strata and they have so many disparities. There are fights among them and they use lethal weapons in their fights that kill hundreds of people at a time. Every group, in pursuit of proving itself better or correct, makes machinations to annihilate others. Others are aliens, foreigners, infidels and wrong-doers. Religions and social and political ideologies that must bring people together have, in fact, made them stand much apart and divided. This is really pathetic and does not show at all that human beings are the best of creatures and have the intelligence and gumption.

Afghanistan is also one of the societies that are heterogeneous to a certain extent. There are people from different ethnic groups who have their sub-cultures. Though they have embellished Afghan society with variety but at the same time there have been instances when these groups have had clashes among one another. These clashes resulted in civil wars and influenced Afghan society negatively to a great extent. The other countries that had their interests in Afghan society used these clashes for their political purposes and further added fuel to the fire.

However, today Afghan society is standing in a different position. It is in a process of developing a peaceful life for its people. At this crucial juncture, it is really necessary that Afghan society must stand united and face challenges as a strong nation. It must not let the differences among different groups to dominate their national integration. The younger generation can play a tremendous role in this regard. They are educated and they have already experienced the consequences of decades of instability and wars; therefore, they can better decide which way to opt - co-existence or no existence.

It was said by famous English philosopher, Bertrand Russell, "It's co-existence or no existence." If Afghan people need to guarantee their national integration in the times to come when they will be tested by the challenges as the international forces are in the process of withdrawal from the country, they need to learn to hold each other's hands tightly and try to help each other in nation building. They have to understand that the different groups in the country are basically different parts of the same body and without the support of any of them it would not be able to make the body complete and make it work and function properly. Otherwise, the socio-political circumstance may prove to be very much cruel and they may blow away, like light straws, all those who are divided.



Hotbeds of Terror Should be Ruined

By Hujjatullah Zia

In retrospect, the conflagration and massacre of the dark days of war by Taliban's regime will never fade into oblivion. Afghan people recoil with fear and hatred whenever the sad memories of the militants' callous actions flash through their minds. Widows still wince at the memory of how harshly their husbands were beheaded and the tearful eyes of orphans bespeak of the regime's heinous crime. Likewise, the painful wounds of mothers' hearts are bleeding for missing their dears and the anger of revenge is boiling up inside the victims' party. The nightmarish image of the bloody incidents and tragic death of innocent people is too difficult to put into words. Militancy is a chronic problem which takes heavy toll of our nation. The protracted war never ebbs despite the fact that the government made great sacrifices to bring the militants to the peace table. Taliban's intensified attacks and emergence of self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) deteriorated the security situation. Afghanistan's urge and peace offering to warring factions fall on deaf ears. The US and NATO combat mission in Afghanistan ended and the war on terror did not bear the desired result.

Civilians are left at the mercy of war and terror since the insurgents indiscriminately spill the blood of combatants and non-combatants alike. With the ISIL's footing, a number of minority group lost their lives on the basis of their race, color and beliefs and sectarian violence was stoked on a large scale. Moreover, it is feared that the warring parties, mainly Taliban outfit, will increase their inroads unless the peace negotiation comes to fruition - which constantly met failure. It is self-explanatory that insurgents, mainly ISIL, pigeonhole the public on the basis of their race, color and creed, this view arise from false assumption and radical mindsets, and ultimately use to color the entire country with the same brush. Needless to say, the militants' radical ideology is based on personal understandings - this will lead to intolerance and justifies their acts of terror. It is believed that many members of militant groups are pawns, rather than religious ideologues, used in political game to pressurize the government.

Pakistan Prime Minister's Advisor on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz has said in a recent statement that seminaries along the Afghan-Pak border and tribal belts, especially North Waziristan, had become a safe haven for terrorists. He believed that madrasahs run bomb-making factories, terrorist training centers and suicide bombers producers. He said, "In one mosque that I visited, I remember, in Miranshah, from outside we did not see anything. But under the mosque there were a 70-room basement, three stories, in which there were four-five IED factories, four-five suicide training centers, communication network, VIP room, conference rooms, amazing infrastructure." However, he blamed the Afghan refugees for the tribal belts of Pakistan becoming a hub of terrorism. Regarding ISIL group, military officials estimated last year that there were between 1,000 and 3,000 ISIL fighters operating in Nangarhar. However, Brigadier General Shoffner stated that ISIL "is primarily contained to one district out of 404 districts within the entire country. Shoffner said that many of them were former Pakistani Taliban fighters "that have changed allegiance to Daesh". According to Shoffner, those fighters were pushed into Afghanistan by a crackdown on militants in Pakistan. But Shoffner also added that the ISIL group remains a "strategic threat" in Afghanistan.

It does not matter whether the militants were pushed out or in, but both Pakistan and Afghanistan are in the same boat and as members of QCG group, they have to eradicate the terrorists' safe havens, especially the seminaries that train suicide bombers, brainwash the stu-

dents and produce explosive devices. In other words, the first and foremost step to be taken, regarding counterinsurgency, should be rooting out the hotbed of terror and militancy that is to say demolishing their basements so as to prevent them from laying further eggs or poisoning more minds.

Since there are many masterminds behind the terrorist scenes, they continue their acts of terror for years and it is possible through establishing madrasahs and poisoning the minds of youths, mainly those who come from poor families. Hence, there are many madrasahs inside and across the border involved in terrorist activities.

Last year, BBC released that spreading Islamic extremism in a girls' madrasah in Northern Afghanistan has raised concerns among Afghan women regarding the spread of radicalism. The news reports that a madrasah under the name of "Ashraf-u-Madaris" in Kunduz teaches women religious instructions which are in conflict with Afghans' culture and tradition. It adds that the students are of the view that listening to radio, watching television, taking photo, celebrating the days like teacher's day, mother's day, birthday and outdoor work for women are all forbidden. The way of teaching, clothing, and the way of the students' interpretation from religion have raised the people's serious concerns and also raised a question that what are the main objectives of the teachers?

According to the news "Ashraf-u-Madaris" was founded by Mulavi Abdul Khaliq and Mufti Sirajuddin, the influential mullahs in Kunduz province, four years ago and presently six thousand girls are studying there. It is further said that the madrasah has also branches in Takhar and Baghlan and it is intended to open some more branches in 9 provinces of the country. A religious society, which is stuck in traditional thought and fundamental social mores, closes the door to development. This can be seen by glancing over the pages of our history over the centuries. Because our believers were myopic and radical, Afghan society had taken many tortuous paths, missed its destination and has often stepped backwards. Due to past political blunders, the present generation is doomed to suffer. The present insecurity and economic constraints are the legacy of our past errors. Hence, as Afghanistan has had political ups and downs and people have experienced different regimes throughout the history. We have to move on cautiously. At the least we should not be subjected to cruelties through our religious beliefs or traditional practices. We must notice the sinister faces behind the religious façade and recognize wrong practices masked in moral norms. Our religious values and cultural mores must not be spoiled. Let us learn from the history and practice upon. Of course, we live in a more modern and civilized era than our forefathers ever dreamt about. Now we have many politicians, economists and other educational personalities who can play a vital role for the betterment of our society. These madrasahs will create serious challenges for the country in near future via spreading hatred and intolerance towards the public beliefs and culture. Currently, it is believed that many suicide bombers are trained in the same atmosphere and our people suffer the outcome painfully. Thus, the Afghan government with the help of the regional countries and international allies has to take serious step in this regard.

As members of QCG, Afghanistan and Pakistan either have to bring the warring factions to the peace table or intensify their counterinsurgency operation, rather than wasting further time and energy. So, terrorism should be rooted out in any possible ways and civilians are not to fall victims anymore.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com

China Contributes to the Development of Afghanistan

By WANG Daohao

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

China is a friendly neighbor of Afghanistan. The two countries are of a community of shared destiny. Based on that, China would like to see a stable and prosperous Afghanistan and always contributes to the development of Afghanistan through the economic and trade cooperation.

In the past, China was a development partner for Afghanistan. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, although China was not well off at that time, the Chinese government built some aid projects in Afghanistan such as Parwan Irrigation System and Kandahar Hospital, which are still functioning well in promoting the livelihood and welfare of the local people.

In recent years, China has been increasing bilateral economic and trade cooperation to further promote the development of Afghanistan.

First, bilateral trade has increased dramatically. To promote the economic development of Afghanistan and Afghan export to China, the Chinese government unilaterally granted duty free treatment to 95% of Afghan-originated products exported to China in 2013. In 2015, the duty free treatment was extended to cover 97% of Afghan-originated products exported to China. In 2015, Afghan export to China grew 2.4 times in value than that in 2012 according to statistics from China Customs. Bilateral trade reached \$1.05 billion in the fiscal year of 2014-2015 and China became the third largest trading partner of Afghanistan according to statistics from Central Statistics Office of Afghanistan.

Secondly, China is now the largest investment origin country in Afghanistan. Chinese companies have invested a lot in different sectors in Afghanistan, generating government revenues and creating thousands of job opportunities. In the mining sector, China National Petroleum Corporation

(CNPC) has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in Amu Darya Oil Project and is ready to invest more. Metallurgical Corporation of China (MCC) and Jiangxi Copper Corporation have invested about \$360 million and are going to invest billions of dollars more to develop Aynak Copper Mine. Huawei Technologies and ZTE have been operating in Afghanistan for many years, and contribute a lot to the great improvement of the telecommunication services in Afghanistan. China Railway Shijiu Corporation, China 19th Metallurgical Corporation, Xinjiang Beixin Road & Bridge Corporation have been actively participating in the infrastructure development in Afghanistan.

In addition, China has been providing grants to Afghanistan to implement projects in different economic and social sectors. Although China is not the largest donor country to Afghanistan, China's assistance is sincere and without any political conditions attached. Under the Chinese grant, China has trained more than 2000 professionals in different fields through bilateral and multilateral channels, provided many batches of goods and materials such as agricultural machinery, ambulances, protocol vehicles, medical equipment, wheat, office equipment, and humanitarian relief supplies, offered cash grants, cancelled government debts of \$9.6 million owed by the Afghan government, and built some projects such as Jumboriate Hospital, Chinese Language Department Teaching Building and Guest House of Kabul University, National Center for Science and Technology Education, Multi-functional Hall in the Presidential Palace. What's more, China is going to continue her assistance to Afghanistan, help develop more human resources, donate office supplies to the Afghan government, provide teaching equipment to Kabul University, build projects such as the National Vocational and Technical Institute, affordable residential apartments, simple shelters for flood victims, as well as some other projects under discussion.

Mr. Wang Daohao is the Economic and Commercial Counselor in Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Kabul.



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

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.