

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



March 19, 2018

Ethnic Diversity: As Afghanistan's Weakness and Strength

Nation building is considered as the end of ethnic loyalties and their replacement by allegiance to a nation. It is a process that any country shall go through if it wants to put an end to its social conflicts; societies divided by ethnicity, sect or language usually face different conflicts, are less likely to reach co-operative solutions, and more likely to victimize minority social groups.

One of the most serious charges leveled against ethnic, sect or language differentiation is that it is the root cause of violent civil conflicts. Afghanistan, in terms of ethnic diversity weak management is an outstanding example, and as such, it suffers a much higher incidence of civil war. Ethnic conflicts in Afghanistan as a developing country have become a major policy concern. Also, it is one of the key factors for both humanitarian and military interventions in the country. Such policy interventions have been partly motivated by the manifestly debating consequences of civil war for the Afghan society which it occurs. Anyhow, there have probably been also an element of national interest. As civil wars have social affects far beyond the boundaries and borders of the affected state. Evidence show refugees create waves of migration. Of course, most civil wars end to illegal migration and drug trafficking which directly affect other countries, especially the neighboring countries.

Ethnic differentiation is also considered as detrimental to economic in developing countries including Afghanistan. Research findings show that ethnic diversity reduces the rate of economic growth. These findings explain the reduction of the rate of economic growth in terms of hypothesized effect of ethnic diversity upon political choices of the people. In other words, diverse societies are alleged to find it more difficult to solve their conflicts through a co-operative solutions. As in these societies, most often if not always, the social conflicts ends to civil violent conflicts, it is more likely for them to waste resources in distributional struggles. As weak economic balance show in the Afghanistan, the consequences of this dysfunctional politics are claimed to be immense. Social scholars attribute the Afghanistan's present poverty mainly to its high ethnic diversity and lack of economic distribution among the different ethnics in the country. Even the findings of Easterly and Levine show that ethnic division aptly summarizes the proposition: ethnic divisions are responsible for economic policies which are so impoverishing as to be tragic. As with civil war, impoverishment casts a long shadow. As a result, the Afghan government attempts to address it through aid programs.

The above mentioned effects of the ethnic division can be tested in Afghanistan. Civil war is the extreme manifestation of the more general phenomenon of dysfunctional politics in Afghanistan. Dysfunctional politics is the product of lack of ethnic diversity management in the country. On the other hand if ethnic diversity is managed systemically and fairly, it will end to functional politics in the country too. The underlying propositions are that ethnic diversity and divisions make co-operation very difficult and it victimizes the minorities ultimately.

Afghanistan is a country with many ethnic groups. The diversity of ethnic groups in Afghanistan has been always a challenging issues for the governments. Thus, ethnic diversity is one of the research fields that social scholars are very interested in and many researches have been conducted to assess the effects of ethnic diversity in different societies. The results of these research show that there is a direct correlation between the type of ethnic diversity management and civil conflicts: If governments employ ethnic political and economic distribution policies that can manage the ethnic diversity and change it to a driver of economic growth in the country and if they lack political and economic distribution policies, the country will experience continuous civil conflicts too. Based on this, the sustainable solution to the pro long Afghan conflicts is, to put political and economic distribution policies in place in Afghanistan build upon the experience and lessons of the countries like Sweden that have successfully managed their ethnic diversity and their citizens live a peaceful life.

When Shall We Overcome?

By Joseph E. Stiglitz

In 1967, riots erupted in cities throughout the United States, from Newark, New Jersey, to Detroit and Minneapolis in the Midwest – all two years after the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles exploded in violence. In response, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed a commission, headed by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, to investigate the causes and propose measures to address them. Fifty years ago, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (more widely known as the Kerner Commission), issued its report, providing a stark account of the conditions in America that had led to the disorders.

The Kerner Commission described a country in which African-Americans faced systematic discrimination, suffered from inadequate education and housing, and lacked access to economic opportunities. For them, there was no American dream. The root cause was "the racial attitude and behavior of white Americans toward black Americans. Race prejudice has shaped our history decisively; it now threatens to affect our future."

I was part of a group convened by the Eisenhower Foundation to assess what progress had been made in the subsequent half-century. Sadly, the Kerner Commission report's most famous line – "Our Nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal" – still rings true.

The just-published book based on our efforts, *Healing Our Divided Society: Investing in America Fifty Years After the Kerner Report*, edited by Fred Harris and Alan Curtis, makes for bleak reading. As I wrote in my chapter, "Some problematic areas identified in the Kerner Report have gotten better (participation in politics and government by black Americans – symbolized by the election of a black president), some have stayed the same (education and employment disparities), and some have gotten worse (wealth and income inequality)." Other chapters discuss one of the most disturbing aspects of America's racial inequality: inequality in securing access to justice, reinforced by a system of mass incarceration largely targeted at African-Americans.

There is no doubt that the civil rights movement of a half-century ago made a difference. A variety of overt forms of discrimination were made illegal. Societal norms changed. But rooting out deep-seated and institutional racism has proven difficult. Worse, President Donald Trump has exploited this racism and fanned the flames of bigotry.

The core message of the new report reflects the great insight of the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.: achieving economic justice for African-Americans cannot be separated from achieving economic opportunities for all Americans. King called his August 1963 march on Washington, which I joined and at which he delivered his ringing, unforgettable "I Have a Dream" speech, a march for jobs and freedom. And yet the eco-

nomics divide in the US has grown much wider, with devastating effects on those without a college education, a group that includes almost three-quarters of African-Americans.

Beyond this, discrimination is rampant, if often hidden. America's financial sector targeted African-Americans for exploitation, especially in the years before the financial crisis, selling them volatile products with high fees that could, and did, explode. Thousands lost their homes, and in the end, the disparity in wealth, already large, increased even more. One leading bank, Wells Fargo, paid huge fines for charging higher interest rates to African-American and Latino borrowers; but no one was really held accountable for the many other abuses. Almost a half-century after the enactment of anti-discrimination laws, racism, greed, and market power still work together to the disadvantage of African-Americans.

There are, however, several reasons for hope. First, our understanding of discrimination is far better. Back then, the Nobel laureate economist Gary Becker could write that in a competitive market, discrimination was impossible; the market would bid up the wage of anyone who was underpaid. Today, we understand that the market is rife with imperfections – including imperfections of information and competition – that provide ample opportunity for discrimination and exploitation.

Moreover, we now recognize that the US is paying a high price for inequality, and an especially high price for its racial inequality. A society marked by such divisions will not be a beacon to the world, and its economy will not flourish. The real strength of the US is not its military power but its soft power, which has been badly eroded not just by Trump, but also by persistent racial discrimination. Everyone will lose if it is not addressed.

The most promising sign is the outpouring of activism, especially from young people, who realize that it is high time that the US lives up to its ideals, so nobly expressed in its Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal. A century and a half after the abolition of slavery, the legacy of that system lingers. It took a century to enact legislation ensuring equal rights; but today, Republican-controlled courts and politicians often renege on that commitment.

As I concluded my chapter, "An alternative world is possible. But 50 years of struggle has shown us how difficult it is to achieve that alternative vision." Further progress will require determination, sustained by the faith expressed in the immortal words of the spiritual that became the hymn of the civil rights movement: "We shall overcome."

Joseph E. Stiglitz is the winner of the 2001 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences. His most recent book is *Globalization and its Discontents Revisited: Anti-Globalization in the Era of Trump*.

Will Afghan Reach Peace wishes?

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Every Afghan citizen eagerly wishes a day in which their children and youths could go to school, university or market without fear of dead and explosions. While both government and people repeatedly have called on Taliban to join peace process but unfortunately they have reacted with bombing and massacring the innocent people. At the Kabul Process II conference on 28 February, President Ashraf Ghani proposed to launch peace talks with Taliban without preconditions, offering to recognize the Taliban as a legitimate political group, and presenting a number of significant proposals to be included in a peace process and it was also welcomed by most people and international community but then Taliban has responded it with multiple attacks in several provinces including Helmand, Farah and Kabul. They have, however, insisted that they would talk peace only with Washington.

On the other hand, the successive attacks in Kabul follows the Kabul security plan and also United States newly bolstering efforts to help the Afghan government so as to prevent attacks in capital city through Special Operations raids, intelligence to map out residents and additional military advising, the top U.S. general recently said. Army Gen. John W. Nicholson Jr. said that defending Kabul is the main goal for the U.S.-led military coalition right now. While the number of bombings in the sprawling city has remained about the same, they have increased in size, he said. Hundreds of people have been killed in the past year's blasts, terrorizing civilians and damaging embassies and other buildings.

Thus, it simultaneous with recent expression of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg that Taliban has not been able to achieve their strategic objective and that Afghan security forces have increased military pressure on the group in the last year. "We have decided to increase the size of our Resolute Support training mission. From 13,000 to around 16,000. With our assistance, Afghan forces have increased military pressure on the Taliban. Ensuring they did not achieve their strategic objective of capturing a provincial capital in 2017," he said. He said NATO supports an Afghan-led and Afghan owned peace process and termed the Afghan government's peace offer to the Taliban a clear invitation to the group. "We strongly support an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. I commend President Ghani for his courageous leadership. His offer to the Taliban is the clearest invitation to peace yet. So I call on the Taliban to come to the negotiating table. There is an opportunity now to end the conflict," he said.

Despite the fact that both government and international allies have recently approached with the most flexible tone since 2001. In addition to proposal of free precondition talks, it was emphasized that we must have the courage to listen to grievances, analyses the root causes and drivers of conflict, and hear a diversity of proposals for reconciliation. This is a critically important part of the proposal. It was also hoped that the constructive approach would guide the future talks. So, at this

stage, it was the best opportunity for Taliban to present their own wants instead of presenting their bombs.

The Taliban's policy on whether or not to accept peace talks with Afghanistan's government has been thrown into doubt by recent attacks killing dozens of civilians. In addition, they have released an article which was headlined "Who are the true enemies of peace?" urged the United States, instead of the Kabul government, to come to talks, in what appears a snub to Mr Ghani, who they see as a stooge for America. "The only way to bring effective peace in Afghanistan is to talk to those who have started this illegitimate war in Afghanistan... The permission of peace and war are with the Americans and they have taken the land and air space of Afghanistan under their unlawful control," it read.

Taliban should reconsider this opportunity and think about country's interests and otherwise these conflicts will produce no winner except farther destruction of the county. The conflict has already taken a lot of life, regardless of whether it is a soldier, a civilian or even the Taliban fighters who are from Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the government and international partners also should note that peace building needs certain social bed and components that without them is not possible to attain and will longer remain as an unreachable wish. As the armed conflicts are watered by various social and political motives, they must be thoroughly analyzed and taken to consideration. Thus, the peace component is being inclusive otherwise it may cause dissatisfactions and disunity. Therefore, peace program neither could be confined to mere negotiations with a certain armed party and nor could be designed or decided by certain circles.

In fact, the peace building process is having its root in equal economic development programs and unemployment reductions so that all citizens can benefit from opportunities equally and unanimously support government policies and programs. It is highly important that new generation of Afghanistan believe that social justice and meritocracy are an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous life within and among nations. We uphold the principles of real peace when we promote rights of minority groups, gender equality, children and other vulnerable people.

Moreover, national ownership of the peace process is one of a peace building process matters in any country. While the government should make efforts to develop an enabling environment for shaping the culture of peaceful life in the society. Only, such a culture can ensure the sustainable peace and prosperity in our country. In addition, there are some other tools and components which are essential for generalization peace culture and the development of the spirit of peace in the community; these can include the establishment of beneficial educational programs, the extension of the rule of law, elimination of administrative corruptions and impartial investigations on important warfare cases that needs longer time.

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