

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

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Freedom of Expression

There have always been efforts to restrict freedom of speech in the world in some way or the other. However, the fact is that it has survived anyway and today there are as many opinions as there are human beings and might be even more and it is an encouraging gesture that everyone wants to speak. Why is it so that someone always wants that he should be heard? Why should a person desire that everyone else should be all ears just to his opinions, neglecting everybody else? Nonetheless, it is not probable to confine what the people hear and what they say.

There is an inclination among the people in our society as well that they want to give final opinion, and they always want to draw a final decision regarding others. They also desire that no one should stop them. Though this sort of inclination may be interesting, it has its own disadvantages, and this would only be possible if they were deities. Such proclivity has in fact brought troubles not only to the ones who have them but to the ones who have been influenced by them. Universal Declaration of Human Rights says, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

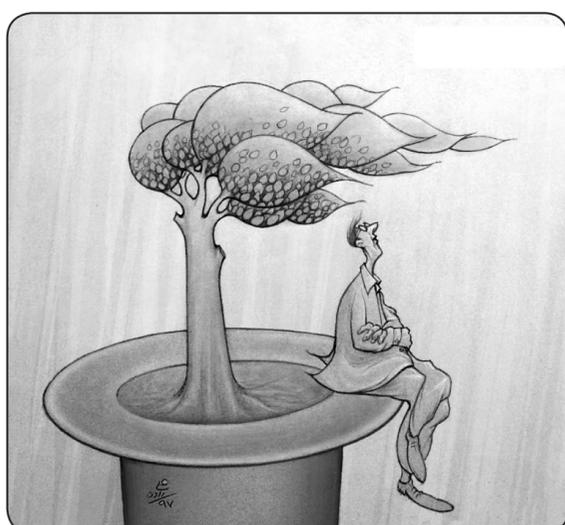
The greatest virtue of human is wisdom and the greatest act of wisdom is to share knowledge through conversation. Conversation, in its passive form, is a thought, while in its active form it is a voice. As a matter of fact it is difficult to recognize the being of a human without his voice in the infinite expanse of the universe. Our reach is to the extent where our voice can echo and without our voice we would disappear in the darkness of silence. So, it is important that we talk as long as we live. The ones who do not have the opportunity to talk they feel that the unspoken words spread throughout their bodies like poison and snatch their happiness.

However, those people would be controversial who, themselves, would always talk but not allow others to do so. Their conversation would really hurt and would be an agony even if they talk about eternal bliss and peace. It can be observed that the history has never witnessed a nation that might have acquired all the truth in the world; if such a miracle had happened the world would have been free of all sort of deprivations and sufferings. It is the reality of life that its truths are distributed among different times, places, languages and minds. It would be great if all the truths could be acquired from the old men who sit under the tree and tell different sorts of stories to the people; but the reality is different.

Therefore, everyone must be given a chance to speak their minds and let the words flow through their tongues and reach others, so that they can listen to them and analyze them; in this way the speaker would not feel that his words were not given the due respect. A very limited reservoir of knowledge has reached to us and if a major part of it remains untold and is victimized by silence, we would have a major loss - a loss that would be very difficult to compensate for. Here it is important to note that there are certain people, who, when talk, try to create conflicts and differences; however, it should not be forgotten that if such people remain silent, they would create even more divergences.

It is really important that human beings must keep the doors and windows of their inner selves open and let their expressions free like the winds in the deserts and the water flowing in the rivers. Indeed, the ones who speak are the real teachers and while those who are silent basically hide what they have. Therefore, it is necessary that the tradition and culture of speaking must be followed and pursued so as to spread what people know and let the listener judge as per his perceptions.

In our society, for many years there have been certain limitations which are imposed on the people and which hamper free thinking and free expression; however, the people have not dared to stand against such limitations though these limitations influence them the most. Moreover, it can be observed that among the ruling elite there is a sort of reservation regarding freedom of expression and they try to practice it in some way or the other. They try to impose limitations on freedom of expression through certain ways - they strive to generate social pressure, and they even design laws to acquire their objective. This clearly shows that they are afraid of the realities, and they are not confident enough to face them. However, the people have to understand that only a limited number of people have their self-centered incentives behind such controlled silence; therefore, such efforts should never be supported, and people must make efforts to shatter all such chains that strive to chain their thoughts and their talks.



Kabul summons Pakistani Diplomat after Imran Khan's Controversial Expressions

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

On Saturday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned a Pakistani diplomat official from the embassy in Kabul in a strong protest over Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's controversial statement about Afghanistan. The foreign minister told the Pakistani diplomat that PM Khan's remarks were interference in the internal affairs of the country and demanded an explanation to it. The spokesperson of Afghanistan's foreign ministry Sibghatullah Ahmadi said, "Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked Pakistani Counselor for clarification on the recent remarks by PM Imran Khan regarding the establishment of a new government in the near future. The government of Afghanistan expressed its grave objection & deemed such remarks a flagrant interference in its internal affairs".

Referring to the US-Taliban peace efforts, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan had said on Friday that peace in Afghanistan is "around the corner." "Negotiations have been initiated with the Taliban. God willing, our brothers in Afghanistan would live together in peace in coming days," Khan told a big public gathering in northwestern Bajaur tribal district on the Afghan border, quoted by multiple media reports. Without elaborating further, Khan asserted the peace process would result in stability, trade and economic prosperity for the region, and particularly for Afghanistan to enable the war-shattered country stand on its own feet.

"A good government will be established in Afghanistan, a government where all Afghans will be represented. The war will end and peace will be established there," Imran Khan added on last Friday. The remark made after US Department of State termed Taliban talks with the US negotiators as meaningful progress. He said that in the fresh round of talks, the two sides were able to move to agreement in draft on the first two principles. "In this round of talks, we were able to move to agreement in draft on the first two principles, counterterrorism assurances and troop withdrawal.

When the draft agreement finalized, Taliban and an inclusive Afghan negotiating team that includes the Afghan government and other Afghans to begin intra-Afghan negotiation for a political settlement and a comprehensive ceasefire," he added. Hours after the news broke on Qatar talks, US Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad said in a tweet that he wrapped up a marathon round of talks with Taliban in Doha. Khalilzad said peace requires agreement on four issues: counterterrorism assurances, troop withdrawal, intra-Afghan dialogue, and a comprehensive ceasefire.

Anyway, this is for the second time a Pakistani diplomat has been summoned by Afghanistan in a month. A few weeks ago Afghanistan summoned Zahid Nasrullah, the Pakistani envoy to Afghanistan after he said that Afghan peace talks will be impacted if New Delhi retaliates after the Pulwama terror attack in which India lost 40 CRPF personnel. Afghanistan has also complained to the United Nations

Security Council (UNSC) against Islamabad due to its engagement with the Taliban and attempts to subvert the Afghan peace process. Pakistan government had invited the Taliban for talks along with the US in Islamabad, infuriating Kabul. However, the talks were canceled by the Taliban after the letter by the Afghanistan government to UNSC. The Afghanistan government said, not only they were not consulted before the talks was to take place but the meeting undermines the ongoing peace efforts and violates Afghanistan's national sovereignty. There has been growing pressure from India, Afghanistan, and Iran on Pakistan to dismantle the terror groups in its territory but Islamabad has always refused the blames.

The summons of Islamabad Diplomat also simultaneous with President Ashraf Ghani's government frustration about what Kabul regards as Afghanistan being sidelined during talks between Taliban and U.S. negotiators, drawing a rebuke from Washington. Tensions have been building between Kabul and Washington over U.S. efforts to forge a peace pact with the Taliban that includes a U.S. troop withdrawal, something that Kabul fears could weaken its own negotiating position.

Thereupon, Hamdullah Mohib, the National Security Advisor has traveled to United States to present Kabul's concerns over the unclear peace process but he could not succeed to meet US NSA, John Bolton, owing to having busy schedule. Expressing serious concerns and fears about a process in pursuit of peace, he used unpleasant words during his meeting and interactions within the US. Mohib accused Khalilzad of deliberately withholding information about the talks from the Afghan government. "We think either Zal -- Ambassador Khalilzad -- doesn't know how to negotiate or in fact there may be other reasons behind what he is doing. What he is doing is not getting a deal that will result in peace in Afghanistan," as quoted by CBS News.

"The Taliban are not in a mood to negotiate with the Afghan government and there is no reason for them to do so. They're gaining. Their sole aim, expectation and reasons in wanting to talk directly with the United States are to give themselves legitimacy." "We don't know what's going on. We don't have the kind of transparency that we should have," Mohib told reporters at a news conference on Thursday. The Afghan government is not consulted and got the information in bits and pieces," Mohib added. "Now we would ask the United States to provide clarification on what its long-term strategy and interests are in our country," he said. "I think what no one is prepared for any sudden changes to our partnerships that fall outside the boundaries of our guiding documents or that betray all both countries have invested to build over the past two decades."

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Picking Up the Pieces After Hanoi

By: Richard N. Haass

When last month's summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un ended without a deal, the result was not surprising. One or both countries came to Hanoi with a misunderstanding of what was possible.

The United States maintained that North Korea wanted nearly all international sanctions lifted upfront and was not prepared to give up enough of its nuclear facilities to warrant doing so. North Korean officials explained that they were prepared to dismantle the country's main facility, the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center, "permanently and completely," but only in exchange for a considerable reduction in existing sanctions.

The anticlimax in Hanoi was perhaps the inevitable result of a process in which the two leaders dominated, optimistic about their personal relationship and confident in their abilities. Senior officials and other staff members, who normally devote weeks and months to preparing for such summits, had but a limited role.

The question is what to do now. One option is to try to negotiate a compromise: either more dismantling of nuclear infrastructure in exchange for more sanctions relief, or less dismantling in exchange for less relief.

Although one of these approaches may prove possible, either outcome would be less than ideal. Simply agreeing to give up individual nuclear facilities is not the same as denuclearization. Indeed, it does not necessarily even get us closer to denuclearization, because facilities could be built or expanded as others are being dismantled. Precisely this currently seems to be occurring. Meanwhile, lifting sanctions removes the pressure on North Korea to take meaningful steps toward denuclearization.

So what are the alternatives? Using even limited military force risks escalation, a costly war from which no one would benefit, and a crisis in relations between the US and South Korea. And, given North Korea's demonstrated resilience, existing or even additional sanctions alone are highly unlikely to be enough to coerce its leaders into abandoning their nuclear program.

Moreover, no matter how much pressure is brought to bear on North Korea, China and Russia will likely do whatever is necessary to ensure its survival, given their strategic interest in avoiding a reunified Korean Peninsula aligned with the US. Hopes that North Korea will collapse under its own weight are thus unrealistic.

Trump seems to harbor the equally unrealistic notion that North Korea will voluntarily give up its nuclear weapons in order to become the next Asian economic tiger. But while Kim wants sanctions relief, fundamental economic reform would threaten his tight grip on power, and giving up his nuclear weapons and missiles would make North Korea and himself vulnerable. He has taken note of what happened to Ukraine, which voluntarily relinquished its Soviet-era nuclear weapons in the early 1990s, as well as to Iraq's Saddam Hus-

sein and Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi.

The status quo, however, is no solution. The current testing moratorium could end; indeed, North Korea is threatening to resume tests and there is evidence it is reconstituting its principal missile-testing site. This may be a bid to encourage the US to show more flexibility, or the North may actually be preparing to restart testing - a step that would likely lead the US to resume large-scale military exercises with South Korea and push for new sanctions. Talks would likely be suspended; we would be back to where we were two years ago but with an overlay of recrimination and mistrust.

Even absent such developments, drift is not desirable. North Korea could use the passage of time to increase the number of nuclear weapons in its arsenal and make some improvements to its warheads and delivery systems without overt testing. There is a big difference between a North Korea armed with a handful of inefficient warheads and inaccurate missiles and one with dozens of advanced weapons that could be mounted on accurate long-range missile systems capable of reaching the US.

At this point, any realistic policy must begin with accepting the reality that complete and fully verifiable denuclearization is not a realistic prospect any time soon. It need not and should not be abandoned as a long-term goal, but it cannot dominate near-term policy. An all-or-nothing policy toward North Korea will result in nothing.

So it makes sense to explore a phased approach. In an initial phase, North Korea would agree to freeze not just the testing of its systems, but also the production of nuclear material, nuclear weapons, and long-range missiles. This would require the North Korean authorities to provide a detailed accounting (a so-called declaration) of the relevant facilities and agree to verification by international inspectors.

In exchange, North Korea would receive the sort of substantial sanctions relief it sought in Hanoi. There could also be an end to the state of war that has existed for the past seven decades, and liaison offices could be opened in Washington, DC, and Pyongyang. But full sanctions relief and diplomatic normalization would come only with full denuclearization.

This might well be too much for North Korea, arguably the world's most closed society. If so, the bulk of the sanctions need to remain in place; they would be lifted only in proportion to any dismantling - and only so long as the world could be confident that North Korea was not developing new capabilities to replace those it was abandoning. The US could specify which sites, in addition to Yongbyon, need to be dismantled.

Even this less ambitious approach would likely prove extraordinarily difficult. But, given the high stakes and unattractive alternatives in dealing with North Korea, any viable route to a settlement that ensures long-term stability is worth pursuing.

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