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

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Peaceful Co-Existence: A Tool for Sustainable Development

The notion of peaceful co-existence is, like all such notions in the social sciences, better understood contextually and thematically. Peaceful co-existence ensures economic prosperity for all social groups. In addition, it lends itself to manipulations and different usages. It is a good servant, indeed, a handy compass, at the control and command of its master. It serves the mighty as well as the weak, the big as well as the small. More importantly, it has been in existence since human settled experiences. In other words, the desire for peaceful existence is part of humanity and has dominated and continued to dominate international, national and local/community efforts at promoting the well-being of the people.

For a peaceful co-existence, the neighboring countries shall develop specific principles to protect and defend their independence. For example, China, India and Myanmar have issued five principles of peaceful co-existence as pillars on which to base their developmental aspirations.

The five principles were built around" mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states; mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality of members; mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence. The popularity of these principles and their relevance in today's world can be seen from their almost unconditional endorsement by the United Nations in its charter.

Sustainable Development

The failure of traditional development strategies, which were basically (top-down), to meaningfully impact positively on the lives of the rural populace, has resulted in the search for, and adoption of an alternative development approach, which applies "bottom-up" strategy to development. As a concept, sustainable development is that development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is development which protects the environment, advances economic prosperity and social justice. The practical implications of this orientation, is that sustainable development frowns at all activities that degrade or have the potential of degrading the environment, and demands that these activities be stopped. It is, therefore, not surprising that sustainable development is fanatically environment-friendly and advocates and pursues activities and policies that are intended to renew and improve the environment. More importantly, sustainable development preaches, among other things, capacity-building among local beneficiaries of development projects, to ensure that these projects will continue in existence and remain functional even when external assistance is withdrawn or ceases. As a result, sustainable development cherishes and calls for effective broad participation as a means to sustain the development process, hence the actual meaning of the "bottom-up" approach.

Therefore, sustainable development is that development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This scenario plays itself out only in conditions of peace and peaceful co-existence. Lack of peace or its converse, a situation of conflict, armed struggle, war and even threats of these, is not and cannot be conducive to development. Crises destabilize human settlements, economic activities, social interactions; conflicts unnecessarily raise tensions and create uncertainties. Apart from all these, conflicts destroy human lives, vital infrastructure, and natural resources.

Peace, on the other hand, promotes development in several ways. Under peaceful conditions people are more at ease and can easily activate their humanity. They can meaningfully think about their present conditions and ways of improving their future. They can invest in economic ventures, participate in social and political activities and think about future generations.

Peace ensures peaceful co-existence and sustainable development among the people and nations. The relative peace and harmony across the borders, and the opening and sustaining of the routes across the borders, is not possible without peaceful co-existence. Finally, we hope that the current peace talks lead to a durable peace in Afghanistan to enable the country to play its strategic role to connect the regional countries and beyond together. Peaceful Afghanistan means, peaceful co-existence and economic prosperity for the region and beyond.

Public Sufferings Continue even with Democratic Discourses

By: Hujjatullah Zia

Violation of human rights and humanitarian law have been widespread around the globe in general and in war-stricken countries in particular. A large number of individuals have been suffering severely and neither national laws nor international instruments could safeguard their rights, liberty and dignity.

People's rights and freedoms were trampled upon both in individual and collective life. There are many reasons behind the malpractices and violation of people's rights and liberties. Despite heated topics about democracy and human rights and global conferences, the public sufferings have continued unabated. The conflict and terrorism had multiplied the public sufferings and there seems no light at the end of the tunnel.

There are many reasons behind violation of human rights. First, religious intolerance and ideological differences played a highly destructive role in human societies and triggered bloody wars throughout the history. People suffered painfully on the basis of their religious backgrounds. Despite all the sacrifices made in this regard, ideological differences still take their toll on people's life and liberty. Religious radicals still shed streams of blood under the sacred term of religion. They intend to impose their warped minds on individuals at the barrel of gun. In a nutshell, lack of religious tolerance and persisting in dogmatic ideology yet threaten human rights around the world. For instance, the Taliban and the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), who blackmail the entire world, were established out of sectarianism and inflexible ideology.

Similarly, racial discrimination and ethnocentrism are the second reason behind violence and bloodshed which restrict individuals' rights. Elementally, when an ethnic group deems itself superior than another, it will also claim further rights – this will lead to tension and may spark political unrest within a society. Claiming racial superiority is tantamount to humiliating the natural dignity of other mankind. The history shows that whenever a group was held in contempt, it showed a strong reaction against the violators of their rights and dignity.

The escalated violence and bloodshed, violation of human rights and extreme cruelty unfold man's megalomania and insatiable thirst for power. The collective life is void of virtue since atrocity and moral corruption prevail around the globe. A civil society, where people could exercise their rights and lib-

erty, is no more than a dream. The headlines of newspapers are replete with bloodcurdling stories: killing innocent civilians, massacring ethnic minority groups, raping women, discriminating one on the grounds of their race and color, etc.

Historical violence and bloodshed, which wrecked deadly havoc on human societies, originated from violation of human rights, aggression and tyranny. In other words, when men found their rights and dignity at risk, they had "recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression".

We live in modern world but men's dream for a utopian world has not come true. Democratic discourse and civil society have been hotly debated but the true spirit of democracy is missing. Men's pains and sufferings continue unabated.

The poignant incidents and heart-wrenching stories of war victims are stain on the collective conscience. The almost passive role of the international community in such a critical situation is a matter of great concern. The world has to stop playing the role of spectator. There is a lot to be done so as to root out the terrorism and uphold the rights and dignity of the people regardless of their ethnicity, color or faith. There is a crying for ending the war through an effective strategy and combating insurgency. Nonviolence and peaceful treatment will build the utopian world of the mankind and vice versa. The current dystopia, which is filled with fear and hatred and the blood of men, women, and children, is the result of radicalism and intolerance. It is believed that secularizing political issues will decrease violence in the region. After all, the hotbed of radicalism and its supporting factors should be abolished so that the terrorist networks no more find room for their activities. Moreover, establishing regional and international counter-insurgency institutions besides national ones will lead to elimination of terrorism and reduce violence to a great extent.

Moreover, men need to fill their spiritual vacuum with humanity and moral standards and listen to the call of their conscience. In addition, the world has to practice upon the golden rule "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" which is the basis of international instruments. Mankind will be able to alleviate the individuals' pains and sufferings through practicing upon international laws.

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Think Local, Develop Better

By: Zara Kayani

In October 2018, Pakistani television news channels reported on how the local authorities in Pishin, a district in Balochistan province, were building a small dam to cope with frequent droughts in the area. Instead of accepting the government's proposal to build the dam at a cost of PKR10 million ($71,000), the local community decided to build one itself for just PKR2.1 million under a European Union-funded rural-development program.

This self-sufficient approach to development has paid dividends elsewhere in Pakistan as well. The Hunza district in the country's far north has a literacy rate of 95% – the highest in Pakistan – thanks to successful community-led schools, which outnumber low-quality government schools. And, emulating the Orangi Pilot Project on the outskirts of Karachi, the community built a sewage system with technical assistance from an NGO and financed 70% of the total cost.

These are not isolated examples. Frustrated with poor or non-existent state government services, local communities across Pakistan are playing a bigger role in development projects. Such community engagement, if widely replicated, could reduce the burden on state finances and enable the country to develop in a more inclusive and sustainable way.

The idea of local communities playing a key part in development initiatives is not new. In 1993, for example, the UNESCO-led Education for All Summit in New Delhi, India, emphasized that education is the responsibility of families, communities, and NGOs, as well as governments. But there has been a gradual change of thinking over the past three decades about how local communities can play a more effective role.

In the 1980s and 1990s, communities took a bottom-up approach to development and distanced themselves from government-directed initiatives. Yet this was largely unsuccessful, owing to political tensions and problems with scaling up such efforts. By contrast, there is now a growing consensus that local communities are most effective when they coordinate their efforts with well-functioning governments, NGOs, and private-sector actors. In a 2013 World Bank report, Ghazala Mansuri and Vijayendra Rao highlighted the problem of civil-society failure in the absence of a "cooperative infrastructure" based on functioning state institutions. In a similar vein, Bishwapriya Sanyal from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology previously argued that "development requires a synergy between efforts made at the top and the bottom, a collaborative effort among the government, market institutions, and NGOs which utilizes the comparative advantage of each type of institution, and minimizes their comparative disadvantages." And a 2004 study by Har-

vard University's Asim Ijaz Khwaja concluded that community engagement substantially improved the maintenance of infrastructure projects as long as their participation was limited to non-technical aspects.

Such a collaborative approach should help communities feel less isolated in development projects. In this regard, Nobel laureate economists Amartya Sen and Elinor Ostrom referred to the development of "social capital" that allows a community to take the initiative in the event that funding or other forms of institutional assistance disappear.

Another collaborative initiative in Pakistan, the STRIDE initiative, provides a further illustration of how local communities can play a positive role in development. The initiative – initially supported by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and now taken up by the provincial governments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and expanded to more districts – aims to improve students' prospects of staying in school and making the transition to higher levels of education.

The initiative introduces afternoon classes and provides transport for students who live far from their school. Crucially, it also seeks to sensitize local communities to retention and transition challenges and encourages them to contribute to sustainable solutions.

These efforts seem to be working. In UC Pirhar in the Muzaffargarh district, the local community contributed PKR 48,000 to cover the transport costs of students attending a nearby STRIDE school, and the UC chairman himself gave rickshaws to some of his poor relatives so they could earn money by transporting STRIDE students.

Another STRIDE school, in the Swabi district, was having problems retaining teachers for the afternoon shift, owing to long traveling distances and mountainous terrain, coupled with social disapproval of women arriving home late in the evening. To resolve the problem, the STRIDE district coordinator, having first consulted local citizens, persuaded the education department to build extra rooms in the school for use as a teachers' hostel.

The conservative mindset in many areas of Pakistan can sometimes make it nearly impossible for women and girls to travel to a distant school. But by taking citizens' concerns into account, the STRIDE initiative has enabled girls to continue their education without creating a backlash.

The development debate in Pakistan has moved on considerably in the past 30 years, and local communities are playing an increasingly important role. Their involvement should be welcomed and encouraged; indeed, it is vital for ensuring the acceptability and sustainability of development initiatives.

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