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Political Changes Ensure Responsiveness of the System

A political system is established within a state so as to safeguard the rights of its people and solve the socio-political issues that may hamper the better life opportunities. If a system fulfills the challenges and solves the problems that may erupt within a state, the system is said to be an ideal system. However, it is not possible to have an ideal system in practice but something near it may be achieved with the help of political prudence and continuous efforts. Moreover, it must never be forgotten that a political setup is a dynamic phenomenon; there have to be changes within the system so as to compensate for the ever-changing nature of human society. In the very earlier states the nature of political systems was not the same as it is today. Throughout the history of statehood, human beings have experienced different sorts of systems and setups. From monarchy to today's modern democracy, there have been myriads of political systems and political practices. The only common thing among them is that they keep on changing. Though some may take a longer time to change but ultimately they have to change as they do not have any other option.

There may be various reasons of changes within a political system. One of the basic reasons is that the human societies evolve, giving birth to new changes which give rise to new challenges. To overcome those challenges the systems have to introduce changes. The need for changes may also arise when the system is not on the track to stability and fails to address the basic problems of the people. In other words it can be said that the perceived dissatisfaction from a system is directly proportional to the demands in change. The great political and social changes in the history of mankind have their roots in the same phenomenon. It can also be said that the standard of living of the subjects and their perceived satisfaction of socio-political scenario is one of the best ways of gauging the effectiveness of a political system.

There are two ways of introducing changes within a system. The first one is through amendments, i.e. bringing about necessary changes within the present system while keeping the basic nature of the system intact. Most of the changes within democratic systems take place through the same process. One of the qualities of democratic systems is that they keep on inviting changes. Moreover the democratic system proceeds in such a way that the changes become inevitable. The example of elections within a democracy is one of the most important processes in this regard. The elections guarantee government change after every specific period of time. If elections are held regularly the system keeps on moving ahead. On the other hand, there can be changes within the overall system that actually tend to change the basic nature of the system. Such a change is basically referred to as a 'system change' and is brought about by a revolution or a military coup. For example, if a system changes from a democracy to a dictatorship or from Capitalism to Socialism, it will be a 'system change'. The change in system becomes inevitable when all the possibilities of changes within a system are lost. The people start suffocating so much that they start demanding for a change in the entire system. Meanwhile, it should be mentioned that most of the revolutions are not very much peaceful and they involve blood-shed.

Amendments within a system are very much normal and there should not be a very strict stand on these sort of changes within a system because it would bring a society to a halt and would hamper its natural growth. Moreover, a democratic system is always a dynamic system and keeps on checking the possibilities of positive changes. It is the characteristic of a dictatorial government that dislikes changes and strives to maintain the status quo. The dictatorial systems are also characterized by being personality centered. The changes within the system are highly dependent on the personality of the ruler. Moreover, as there is no concept of regular elections in most of the dictatorial systems they do not guarantee frequent changes and the rule of the leader may last for many years.

The great democracies in the world have acquired their mature systems after many years of evolution. Changing from very immature and preliminary stages they have reached to today's position where they have been able to address most of the problems of their people. Their example is great guidance for the authorities in our country if they are really interested in establishing a strong political system and a reliable infra-structure upon which the future political setup can be built. Nevertheless, for that they have to give a great sacrifice and that is the sacrifice of their personal gains for the betterment of the majority of the people.

Currently, Afghan political system does not seem to be compensating for the growing demands of time and has basic problems that do not let the system represent the diversity within the Afghan society appropriately and at the same time do not let the people out of troubles that they face. No doubt, we cannot expect Afghanistan to have a well-developed system as the democratic history in Afghanistan is very short, yet it must never be forgotten that in order to have a better system, changes have to be brought continuously as per the demands.

The Global Threat of White Terror

By: Bjørn Ihler

Last week, a far-right extremist killed at least 50 people – including a three-year-old child – worshipping at two mosques in the New Zealand city of Christchurch. Neither white supremacy, nor racially motivated terrorist attacks carried out in its name, are new phenomena. Yet the response to far-right terrorism remains thoroughly insufficient.

After the New Zealand massacre, US President Donald Trump dismissed the threat of white nationalism as a case of "a small group of people" with "a very, very serious problem." This fits into a broader trend, in which attacks by perpetrators with Muslim backgrounds are immediately classified as "acts of terror" and addressed in a well-resourced and systemic way, while violent attacks perpetrated in the name of other ideologies are treated as an "isolated incident."

But there is nothing isolated about such incidents. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2018, the death toll from terrorist attacks associated with far-right groups or individuals has been steadily rising since 2014. In the United States, right-wing extremists have carried out far more attacks than Islamists.

The attack in Christchurch was directly inspired by the 2011 far-right terrorist attack in Norway, of which I am one of the few lucky survivors. Indeed, the Christchurch gunman, Brenton Tarrant, claims to have received the blessing of the perpetrator of the Norway attack, Anders Breivik, who killed 77 people that day.

Breivik is far from Tarrant's only white-supremacist role model. In his rambling "manifesto," released just before the attack, Tarrant also mentions other far-right extremists – such as Dylann Roof, who killed nine African-Americans in a church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015.

All of this goes against the notion that massacres like the Christchurch shootings are cases of disturbed individuals – mentally ill "lone wolves" – carrying out a one-time attack. These attacks are clearly part of a broader pattern, which demands a response on par with all other counter-terrorism efforts.

Such a response must, first and foremost, acknowledge the link between resurgent far-right nationalism and the casual racism and dog-whistle politics that have been creeping back into many societies' public discourse. My colleagues and I at Extremely Together, a counter-extremism youth-engagement initiative convened by the Kofi Annan Foundation, have been following this trend with growing concern. Several of us know first-hand what it is like to live through terrorist attacks.

We also know that, when Trump warns that immigrants will "infest" the US, he is feeding the narrative that some people are sub-human. That narrative – also taken up by other leaders, such as Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro – has real-world consequences, including the emboldening of extreme actors. It comes as no surprise that Tarrant praised Trump in his manifesto as "a symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose."

The response to this intensifying terrorist threat must also reflect the fact that, like Islamist extremism, violent white supremacists are organizing across borders, becoming increasingly closely connected and eager to amplify one another's messages. To counter this trend, governments and civil-society organizations must work to boost coordination and information-sharing, just as they do in response to Islamist terror.

Media also have a role to play. In order to maximize control over his message of hate and its dissemination, Tarrant live-streamed his attack on Facebook. But many news organizations then posted parts of the video on their own platforms, arguably spreading the perpetrator's violent message for the sake of clicks.

Rather than make themselves accomplices and amplifiers of terror, news organizations must stick to fact-based reporting that avoids spreading terrorist propaganda. A debate may be needed – and should be welcomed – to help journalists find the right balance, so that they provide comprehensive independent reporting without becoming tools of extremists.

Of course, part of the responsibility also lies with social-media platforms like Facebook. Today's digital technologies offer an immediate, high-impact channel through which terrorists can reach a global audience, often in real time. Facebook and others must take their share of the responsibility and find ways to prevent their platforms from being used in this manner.

Even as far-right extremism surges, most of the world's people recognize that there is more that unites us than that divides us. Effective responses to poverty, climate change, epidemics, and much else require cooperation across not just territorial borders, but also racial, ethnic, or religious lines.

For my colleagues and I in Extremely Together, the imperative could not be clearer. We must stand together against all forms of extremism, uniting in opposition to the hateful messages – including from our elected leaders – that embolden terrorists of all stripes.

Bjørn Ihler, a survivor of the attack on Utøya in Norway in July 2011, is part of Extremely Together, a counter-extremism youth-engagement initiative convened by the Kofi Annan Foundation.

The Battle for Leadership of the Muslim World: Turkey plants its flag in Christchurch

By: James M. Dorsey

When Turkish vice-president Fuat Oktay and foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu became this weekend the first high-level foreign government delegation to travel to Christchurch they were doing more than expressing solidarity with New Zealand's grieving Muslim community.

Messrs. Oktay and Cavusoglu were planting Turkey's flag far and wide in a global effort to expand beyond the Turkic and former Ottoman world support for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's style of religiously-packaged authoritarian rule, a marriage of Islam and Turkish nationalism.

Showing footage of the rampage in Christchurch at a rally in advance of March 31 local elections, Mr. Erdogan declared that "there is a benefit in watching this on the screen. Remnants of the Crusaders cannot prevent Turkey's rise."

Mr. Erdogan went on to say that "we have been here for 1,000 years and God willing we will be until doomsday. You will not be able to make Istanbul Constantinople. Your ancestors came and saw that we were here. Some of them returned on foot and some returned in coffins. If you come with the same intent, we will be waiting for you too."

Mr. Erdogan was responding to an assertion by Brenton Tarrant, the white supremacist perpetrator of the Christchurch attacks in which 49 people were killed in two mosques, that Turks were "ethnic soldiers currently occupying Europe."

Messrs. Oktay and Cavusoglu's visit, two days after the attacks, is one more facet of a Turkish campaign that employs religious as well as traditional diplomatic tools.

The campaign aims to establish Turkey as a leader of the Muslim world in competition with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and to a lesser degree Morocco.

As part of the campaign, Turkey has positioned itself as a cheerleader for Muslim causes such as Jerusalem and the Rohingya at a moment that Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Muslim nations are taking a step back. Although cautious not to rupture relations with Beijing, Turkey has also breached the wall of silence maintained by the vast majority of Muslim countries by speaking out against China's brutal crackdown on Turkic Muslims in the troubled north-western province of Xinjiang.

Mr. Erdogan's religious and traditional diplomatic effort has seen Turkey build grand mosques and/or cultural centres across the globe in the United States, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa and Asia, finance religious education and restore Ottoman heritage sites.

It has pressured governments in Africa and Asia to hand over schools operated by the Hizmet movement led by exiled preacher Fethullah Gulen. Mr. Erdogan holds Mr. Gulen responsible for the failed military coup in Turkey in 2016.

On the diplomatic front, Turkey has in recent years opened at least 26 embassies in Africa, expanded the Turkish Airlines network to 55 destinations in Africa, established military bases in Somalia and Qatar, and negotiated a long-term lease for Sudan's Suakin Island in the Red Sea. The Turkish religious campaign takes a leaf out of Saudi Arabia's four decade long, USD 100 billion effort to globally propagate ultra-conservative Sunni Islam.

Like the Saudis, Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyaret) provides services to Muslim communities, organizes pilgrimages to Mecca, trains religious personnel, publishes religious literature, translates the Qur'an into local languages and funds students from across the world to study Islam at Turkish institutions.

Turkish Muslim NGOs provide humanitarian assistance in former parts of the Ottoman empire, the Middle East and Africa much like the Saudi-led World Muslim League and other Saudi governmental -non-

governmental organizations, many of which have been shut down since the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. Saudi Arabia, since the rise of crown prince Mohammed bin Salman in 2015, has significantly reduced global funding for ultra-conservatism.

Nonetheless, Turkey is at loggerheads with Saudi Arabia as well as the UAE over the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi; Turkish support for Qatar in its dispute with the Saudis and Emiratis; differences over Libya, Syria and the Kurds; and Ankara's activist foreign policy. Turkey is seeking to position itself as an Islamic alternative.

Decades of Saudi funding has left the kingdom's imprint on the global Muslim community. Yet, Turkey's current struggles with Saudi Arabia are more geopolitical than ideological.

While Turkey competes geopolitically with the UAE in the Horn of Africa, Libya and Syria, ideologically the two countries' rivalry is between the UAE's effort to establish itself as a centre of a quietist, apolitical Islam as opposed to Turkey's activist approach and its support for the Muslim Brotherhood.

In contrast to Saudi Arabia that adheres to Wahhabism, an austere ultra-conservative interpretation of the faith, the UAE projects itself and its religiosity as far more modern, tolerant and forward looking.

The UAE's projection goes beyond Prince Mohammed's attempt to shave off the raw edges of Wahhabism in an attempt to present himself as a proponent of what he has termed moderate Islam.

The UAE scored a significant success with the first ever papal visit in February by Pope Francis I during which he signed a Document on Human Fraternity with Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayeb, the grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar, the revered 1,000-year-old seat of Sunni Muslim learning.

The signing was the result of UAE-funded efforts of Egyptian general-turned-president Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to depoliticize Islam and gain control of Al Azhar that Sheikh Al-Tayeb resisted despite supporting Mr. Al-Sisi's 2013 military coup.

To enhance its influence within Al Azhar and counter that of Saudi Arabia, the UAE has funded Egyptian universities and hospitals and has encouraged Al Azhar to open a branch in the UAE.

The UAE effort paid off when the pope, in a public address, thanked Egyptian judge Mohamed Abdel Salam, an advisor to Sheikh Al-Tayeb who is believed to be close to both the Emiratis and Mr. Al-Sisi, for drafting the declaration.

"Abdel Salam enabled Al-Sisi to outmanoeuvre Al Azhar in the struggle for reform," said an influential activist.

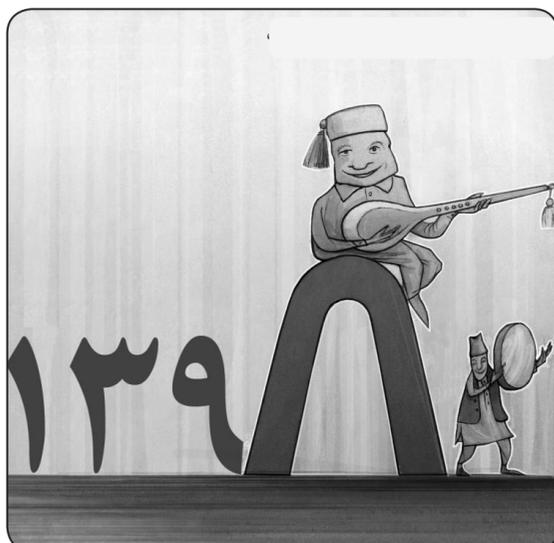
The Turkey-UAE rivalry has spilled from the geopolitical and ideological into competing versions of Islamic history.

Turkey last year renamed the street on which the UAE embassy in Ankara is located after an Ottoman general that was at the centre of a Twitter spat between Mr. Erdogan and UAE foreign minister Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan.

Mr. Erdogan responded angrily to the tweet that accused Fahreddin Pasha, who defended the holy city of Medina against the British in the early 20th century, of abusing the local Arab population and stealing their property as well as sacred relics from the Prophet Muhammad's tomb. The tweet described the general as one of Mr. Erdogan's ancestors.

"When my ancestors were defending Medina, you impudent (man), where were yours? Some impertinent man sinks low and goes as far as accusing our ancestors of thievery. What spoiled this man? He was spoiled by oil, by the money he has," Mr. Erdogan retorted, referring to Mr. Al-Nahyan.

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