

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



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## Do Insurgents Care about Ideology?

The Syria's conflict, which began six years ago, has inflicted heavy casualties upon the Syrian nation and the rights and freedoms of countless individuals were violated. Warring factions, paid no heed to the rule of war and the involvement of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) deteriorated the situation. The ideologue groups, mainly the ISIL, seek to exercise their radical ideology and impose it on people with the barrel of gun.

The ideologue groups come from various backgrounds. It is believed that the gap between the haves and have-nots prompted a number of people to join militant groups so that they can fill the spiritual vacuum and satiate their carnal desires through violence and bloodshed. For instance, the teenagers from the slums show great tendency towards radicalism and the tribal belts and rural areas are more prone to radical mindsets. Psychologists believe that the individuals who suffer from common deprivation in a society will form sub-culture with its certain values and norms different from public standards.

There will be a competition between the upper class and lower class. Both the classes seek to get high social status. This competition starts from schools between the children belonging to the upper and lower classes. Since the lower class does not have the chance and opportunity of the upper one, this group will be surpassed by upper class. Therefore, the lower class will show a hostile reaction. Now members of terrorist networks are constituted mostly by teenagers who come from the lower class. In brief, the larger parts of terrorist groups seek to alleviate their economic pressures rather than exercising a certain ideology.

If children are labelled negatively, they will show inclination towards the same fact. For instance, when a child is detained for committing a crime or accused of a crime and labelled as criminal, this will change their pictures of their personality in their minds. Many children might have been labelled during their school or on streets by their playmates. This will put an adverse effect in the mind of a potential criminal and change them into active one. Many of the children who are involved in terrorist activities were socialized in the same background or in a radicalized atmosphere.

Emil Durkhem, a French sociologist, believes that crime and violation of social norms are natural in a society and a society void of crime will be abnormal. According to him, crime will prompt the society to take preventive measures so as to protect social standards. Moreover, crime will lead to the designation of moral and immoral borders and public reactions towards crime will make people understand the legal norms. Currently, the terrorist groups who are widely involved in violence and bloodshed come from closed structures and have been socialized in tribal belts.

That is to say, a number of individuals have formed sub-culture to fight governments. For instance, the late Mullah Omar formed a small group to fight moral corruptions prevailed in his surrounding areas in Kandahar. To one's unmitigated surprise, his group was armed and grew rapidly and has been changed into a terrorist group. It was soon changed into pawn to be used in political games.

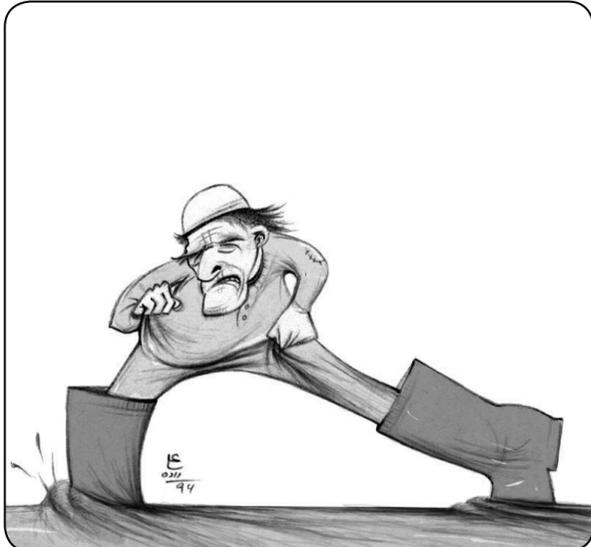
Similarly, the ISIL group, which plays a destructive role and threatens the entire globe, is formed by a number of radical individuals. Under religious term, they declared "Jihad-e-Nikah" to satiate their carnal desires, for they were deprived of girlfriends or wives in their normal life. Simultaneously, they will feel no mercy on men, women and children since being labelled terrorists.

It is not only Syria which suffers from militancy carried out by the radical groups but also many other countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan. The sufferings of mankind are likely to be changed into an endless scenario, mainly with the increase of terrorist groups. Human rights and dignity are violated to a great extent and men's freedoms are curtailed in one way or another. Syria bears the brunt of ISIL's venom. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, has said recently that there are so far about 465,000 people killed and missing in Syria's civil war. It had documented the deaths of more than 321,000 people since the start of the war and more than 145,000 others had been reported as missing.

The United Nations said fighting around Syria's capital has cut off 300,000 people from humanitarian assistance and pauses in the conflict are needed to allow aid convoys to get to the area.

The Syria's destructive war has been intensified by the ISIL group and human rights are trampled upon in the worst possible way. To mitigate the insurgency - be it in Syria or any other countries - the grounds and factors of radicalization must be abolished. Countries must pave a sound environment for citizens and let them not be trained by radical individuals. Furthermore, all supporting elements such as the economic sources should be found out and eradicated.

In brief, only shooting the militant fighters will not be a panacea for the problem, but also the contributing factors are to be combated. Perhaps, one of the reasons behind the constant failure vis-à-vis combating terrorism is ignoring the ground realities.



## Class Discrepancy

By Dilawar Sherzai

The social and political changes in Afghanistan have been able to cast diverse effects on Afghan society. Among different changes the stratification of society into rich and power classes is a dominant one. The differences have been intensified and are affecting the society as a whole.

It has not been the stratification of a society in different classes that causes much trouble to a society rather it is that the stratification has become intense, which has caused the society to suffer or even suffocate.

The wealth that has poured in the country in the last one and half decade does not seem to have benefited the needy people of the society rather that has been accumulated by certain authoritative people who use it for their own benefits and grandeur. Though the stratification into rich and poor classes existed in Afghan society earlier as well, but it has changed its primitive shape; even in the urban regions the stratification is more like modern upper class and lower class division.

There are sociologists who consider the stratification of the society in different strata as a necessity. They believe that it is because of interaction of various strata that the society tends to function as whole - more like functional theory in sociology. Well, this argument is quiet debatable. Actually the class based setup in a society is mostly the outcome of the practice of Capitalism. Capitalism, at least in theory, tends to follow justice and demands that everyone should be gifted according to his ability. Thus, people with more ability can have as much as they deserve lawfully.

Further, the system of Capitalism also allows the individuals to have lawful private property. The modern countries in Europe and America that are based on Capitalism can easily be observed to be having different classes in their societies.

This system seems to be working for them, but there are controversies regarding the future of the system. In fact, if this system has been working for so many countries, there are few pre-requisites that are maintained to a varying extent by these countries that have been helping the system to develop instead of facing a failure. First, it has been made sure that justice should be maintained in its true spirit, i.e. it must not favor only the upper class; rather the upper class itself should be treated by the law and order system in the same way as the other two classes; namely, lower, middle and upper classes.

To put it in simpler terms it can be said that social stratification has not been changed to social injustice. Second, social mobility has been made very easy in such societies. Social mobility basically means movement from one social class to another.

For example, it has not been very difficult for a person taking birth in a lower class to work hard, develop the capability and move to the middle and even to upper class.

There have been equal opportunities for almost all the members of the societies to excel in their lives and become rich. The reverse has been maintained as well, i.e. the people born in rich families but not working hard have been pushed to the lower strata. Social mobility has been able to provide some oxygen

for the social setup to inhale so that it must keep on living. But there have been many controversies in the theory that social stratification can really lead to better development of a society. There are conflict theorists in sociologist who find the stratification of a society into upper and lower classes very much detrimental.

The most critical of social stratification has been Karl Marx, who believed that the division of society into upper and lower classes is the root cause of all the exploitation in the society.

He believed that as the upper class has the means of production in its control therefore it has the control of the entire society, wherein the labors just suffer for the self-centered incentives of the upper class (the terms used by Marx for the upper class and lower class are Bourgeoisie and proletariat respectively). The upper class tends to keep the status quo through the law and order system, which is in their benefit. But Marx believed that such Capitalism has to ultimately fall the victim of its own internal conflict and may result into the revolution of lower class to form egalitarian Communism.

The theory of Marx seems more reactionary to the disadvantages of the stratification of a society. At the same time, it cannot be ignored that in practice there are some major problems in some of the stratified societies. The intensification in class differences have given birth to so many social problems. This has also led to the stagnation of societies and made only few enjoy the most. The societies like Afghanistan where the wealth has poured in without much accountability and weak check and balance system, the stratification has led to sufferings. The upper class in Afghanistan cannot be said to be in the form as it exists in an industrialized society. Rather, it includes the landlords, tribal heads and religious leaders. Both political and economic systems tend to revolve around these people who are in total control of entire wealth and its distribution. Further, it is also true that all these people do not seem to have the ability for what they are gifted.

They, in pursuit of their own benefits, have only made the opportunity of development favor themselves. The poor people of Afghanistan, who have been badly stricken by decades of wars, have only suffered the worst manifestations of poverty. There are millions who do not have the basic requirements of life and are compelled to live their lives in the remotest areas, without much support and attention. Food, cloth, shelter and other requirements like education and security are non-existent for them. And at the same time there are people who own properties worth millions of dollars.

These are all the results of an intense stratification. The poor do not seem to be having many opportunities of improvements in their lives and that means that social mobility, which can provide oxygen to a stratified society does not exist, while the social injustice is on the rise. The law and order system, instead of treating everyone alike, has served as the slave of the upper-class. The current scenario if goes unchecked can bring further misery to Afghan society.

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## Rebuilding the World's Forests

By Justin Adams

Humankind has always had a tricky relationship with forests. We depend on them to regulate the climate and rainfall, clean our air and water, sustain myriad species of plants and animals, and support the livelihoods of over a billion people. Yet we continue to destroy them, to the point that only half the world's original forest cover remains. The price of deforestation can hardly be overstated. Trees consume large amounts of carbon dioxide as they grow, making them vital tools for absorbing the greenhouse-gas emissions - from cars, factories, power stations, and livestock - that result in climate change. If we continue to lose forest cover, the Paris climate agreement's goal of limiting global warming to less than two degrees Celsius (above pre-industrial levels) by 2050 will be impossible to achieve. In fact, to meet that target, we will need to restore a significant amount of forest cover that is already gone.

There are two ways to approach reforestation. The first is to allow agricultural lands to fall into disuse, and then wait for them to revert naturally to forest. This wouldn't cost much, but it would take decades. The second option is more proactive: plant billions of new trees.

As part of the New York Declaration on Forests, signed in 2014, governments pledged to restore hundreds of millions of hectares of forests. But, with most governments short on cash these days, financing the pledge has proved challenging. Against this background, we must try to engage the private sector to deliver the needed investment.

When forests have an economic value, they are more likely to be cultivated than destroyed. And, indeed, trees have been cultivated for profit for millennia. Today, productive forests cover an area of more than a billion hectares, or about one-quarter of the world's forested land.

Such forests produce fuelwood, which accounts for about half of tree removals. They also produce materials for clothes, oils for soaps and lubricants, fruits, and other foods, such as cocoa. Demand for these products is growing, though not as fast as demand for newspaper print falls as a result of computerization. How can demand for forest products be increased? A promising opportunity lies in construction.

Timber has always been an important building material, and remains so for residential construction in places like the United States, Scandinavia, and parts of Southeast Asia. But most buildings today are constructed using bricks and mortar, concrete, and, for larger structures, steel - all materials that produce substantial carbon emissions during the manufacturing process.

While it is unlikely that timber can fully replace any of these materials, new types of engineered wood are making it more competitive. One of these is cross-laminated timber (CLT),

which is made by gluing together layers of wood to create panels that are as strong as steel or concrete, and thus can replace those materials in buildings.

More research is required to determine the precise benefits of using timber to cut CO2 emissions. One estimate comes from architect Anthony Thistleton-Smith, one of the United Kingdom's leading experts on wooden buildings. He recently noted that, whereas a typical British home has a carbon footprint of around 20-21 tons, a CLT home has a negative footprint of 19-20 tons. In other words, every home built with CLT saves 40 tons of CO2 emissions. If the 300,000 new homes targeted for completion in the UK this year were built using CLT, it would be like taking 2.5 million cars off the road. The climate benefits could be massive.

As with so many climate measures, cost can be a major barrier to implementation. And, according to a United Nations report, CLT is more expensive than concrete in Europe. But CLT is still in its infancy, with only a handful of factories in operation. As the CLT supply chain develops, costs will inevitably fall, as has happened with renewable energy.

Moreover, builders report that the total costs of building with CLT already end up similar to those of building with concrete, because it takes less time. After all, unlike concrete, CLT doesn't need time to set.

Of course, delivering such a transformation will not be easy. Vested interests - pressure from industries producing traditional building materials - must be overcome, including by ensuring a level playing field in terms of subsidies. Furthermore, public concerns - for example, regarding fire safety or infestation prevention - must be addressed, and builders will have to learn new skills. Most important, monitoring will have to be improved considerably, so that increased demand does not result in more deforestation.

For many countries, the economic opportunities should be sufficient to make addressing these challenges worthwhile. New plantations could regenerate rural areas, as new factories created opportunities for investors and entrepreneurs. Governments and larger companies would be able to tap the fast-growing green-bond market to fund the early transition, including the creation of systems using drones and satellite imaging to monitor for unsustainable forestry practices.

Opportunities to align economic development with the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions are rare.

Yet that is what reforestation offers. We must take advantage of this opportunity, by pursuing a construction transformation based on restoring trees, the world's most effective carbon-capture tool. In this "new age of timber," we would grow wood, build with wood, and allow our forests to thrive. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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