

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



March 29, 2017

Society as a Whole Must Shun Terrorism

The nature of the war that Afghanistan is undergoing is really complex. There are different actors and factors that are responsible for invigorating terrorism, extremism and insurgency in the country and thus influencing the lives of the people. To stand strong against the circumstances, and be in a position to challenge it seriously requires efforts from all sections of the society. There is no particular institution, organization or group that can take the responsibility of changing the overall situation. Different individuals, groups and institutions have to perform their duties properly, afterwards, there can some expectations of improvement. Security institutions and personnel cannot defeat terrorism alone. Definitely, they have an important role to play and they have given so many sacrifices as well so far; however, terrorism can only be defeated if their efforts are supplemented through proper actions by the society as a whole. Moreover, history and the observation of the international socio-political circumstances will depict the fact that the societies wherein people from different walks of life perform their duties dutifully are destined to face every sort of challenges successfully. Therefore, it is important that the people in our society must also do the same.

Unfortunately, the socio-political circumstances and security situation have made the situation very intricate. At this crucial juncture, there are various ambiguities as well that have been influencing Afghan people to a large extent. They are not sure about the future of their country and their own selves. The social psychology does seem to be contented and the people are losing their confidence on the control of the government. Such a psychology may prove to be detrimental as people would avoid taking part in constructive activities and would think about escaping the situation instead of facing it with courage and determination.

Moreover, people would start disbelieving in democracy, which is the only hope for the betterment of socio-political circumstances. They do not want that they should be called as democratic country but do not have the basic necessities of life. They want food, cloth, shelter and above all security. And the Afghan political system, without providing those basic needs cannot promise to provide other requirements, which seem nothing more than luxury at this instance.

After the formation of National Unity Government (NUG), the people of Afghanistan had great hopes of change and improvement in their lives; however, the mentioned circumstances clearly depict that there are fears of losing the improvements that were previously made. All the parties and authorities that can play a role in bringing about positive changes must take initiative and strive to control the situation. The political leaders and religious scholars can play a very important role in this regard.

Religious extremism is turning into a menace and misusing the same the religious zealots are not ready to leave the insurgency and violence. The religious scholars must do their best to make the people believe in religious tolerance and do not become the victim of fanatic and extremist religious teachings of the militants. They have to make it clear to the insurgents that their tactics of suicide bombings and the bombings in public places are totally against Islam and must be shunned immediately.

Moreover, they, in their sermons, must teach religious compassion, which is the true essence of Islamic teachings.

Political leaders on the other hand must disapprove all such actions and must condemn them in the strongest tone. They, in pursuit of their political interests, must never support them and strive to promulgate democratic norms and values. They need to understand that the betterment of the society as a whole lies in supporting a strong democratic system, not otherwise.

Media, civil society and intellectuals must also play their roles in this regard. They have to understand the nature of the challenges and the demands of the time. Their role is not only of criticizing but also of providing alternative and better solutions to the problems.

Above all, the government must play a tremendous role in this regard as it has most of the authority.

NUG must at least stand for its own promises and make honest efforts to bring about the improvements that it can. It must not waste time in involving in its own differences; rather, it must stand strong for the service of the country as a whole. It must make important decisions regarding security and be prepared to face the challenges that may arise in the upcoming months.

Moreover, it must also keep in consideration that there are political ways of resolving conflicts with the insurgents and there are tactics of keeping them in control, which are more lasting than the security measures being taken to subdue them. Moreover, there are processes that can be pursued to tackle the situation through social developments. All we require at this stance is an iron will to fight insurgency and extremism with full vigor and strength.

“Freedom is not the Absence of Restraints”

By Dilawar Sherzai

The formation of states in human history has been convened by the concept that needs and rights of human beings should be safeguarded. In order to make sure that they have a better living, the formation of states has been necessitated. Today human beings are so much dependent on the state that life without state can only be considered anarchy. State has played dominant role in the life of citizens, but at the same time there have been discussions regarding the role and control of the state over the lives of the citizens.

With rise of individualism in Europe, the concept of human liberty started flourishing speedily. There were political philosophers who even reached to the extent of calling liberty the ultimate aim of human life and suggested that states must guarantee the individual liberty to every possible extent. But absolute liberty could never be maintained and the concept of liberty started finding strong position in the political systems and enjoys the same in current systems of most of the countries of the world.

The concept of liberty has been defined in different ways by different political philosophers and analysts, but the word freedom has been closely linked with the concept. Laski says, “I mean by liberty the absence of restraint upon the existence of those social conditions which in modern civilization are the necessary guarantee of individual’s happiness.” However, liberty in this sense is neither practicable nor desirable in any civilized society. Liberty in this sense shall give rise to chaos and anarchy endangering the life of all the members of the society. In the larger interest of the community certain restraints must be imposed on the individual liberty so that it can be enjoyed by all the members.

In other words these restrictions should be reasonable, just and conducive to social welfare. In the absence of such restrictions it shall indeed be difficult to maintain order and harmony in the society. Since the liberty of each is relative to that of others it has to be adjusted.

Laski also says, “Historic experience has evolved for us rules of convenience which promote right living and to compel obedience to them is a justifiable limitation of freedom.” In short, liberty does not mean absence of all restraints; it rather means the presence of rational restrictions in place of irrational restraints.

As McKechnie has put it, “Freedom is not the absence of all restraints, but rather the substitution of rational ones for irrational.” On the other hand certain other scholars have emphasized the positive aspect of liberty.

For example Gettle says, “True liberty is the positive power of doing and enjoying those things which are worthy of enjoyment and work.” Ernest Barker says the principle of liberty means that, “The state treats each and every moral person as a free agent, capable of developing his own capacities in his own way and therefore capable of enjoying and exercising the rights which are conditions of such development.” But probably the most comprehensive definition of positive liberty has been given by Prof.

Laski. He says, “Liberty is the eager maintenance of that atmosphere in which men have the option to be their best selves. It is a product of rights. Without rights there can be no liberty because in that case men are the subjects of law unrelated to the needs of personality. Liberty therefore, is a positive thing. It does not merely mean absence of restraint.”

The discussed views of liberty suggest certain characteristics of liberty. First, liberty does not mean absence of restraints. On the other hand it means the presence of those conditions which are essential for the development of an individual’s personality. Second, absolute liberty is neither practicable nor desirable because it is something to be enjoyed by all and not the exclusive prerogative of a handful of people. Third, liberty and laws are not antithesis. On the other hand law helps in the promotion of liberty by regulating the actions of the members and laying down norms to be observed by the members in the larger interest of the community.

Modern and developed states of the world consider it necessary to guarantee individual liberty. Especially, democracy has been considered as one of the best forms of government that can provide liberty to individual. According to modern concept, a political system must provide for the following types of liberty; civil liberty, political liberty, economic liberty and national liberty.

All these types of liberty can guarantee a better growth of individual and better fulfillment of his personality. Unfortunately, most of the states of the world have not been successful in providing these necessary liberties to their people. In order to provide liberty to the people in a state there are certain safeguards that have to be carried out.

Among them, absence of privileges is one of the most evident ones. Absence of privilege suggests that all people should be treated equally and there should not be any special privileges for any section of the society. Apart from that, democratic government can also help in safeguarding the liberties of the citizens. The other necessary measures include providence of fundamental rights, rule of law, independence of judiciary, freedom of media, well-organized party system, decentralization of power and economic equality. Unfortunately, our country Afghanistan has been one of the countries that have not been able to provide for the necessary liberties of all the citizens as the country has been going through very preliminary stage of democratization.

Though there are various instances that depict the violation of human liberty in the country, currently the issues of women rights and violence against women are the most dominant ones. There have been many examples that clearly show that women are not given their due liberty. They are confined to their houses and are not appreciated enough to participate in social and political lives. Relevant authorities in this regard have to take serious actions and have to make sure that women, as a part of society, must be given due liberty.

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A Dramatic Comeback for Europe

By Anatole Kaletsky

The Dutch are famous for building dykes that hold back the tides and storms sweeping across the Atlantic. Have the Dutch now done it again, holding back the wave of populist politics that seemed to be threatening Europe after last year’s Brexit referendum and Donald Trump’s victory in the United States? The unexpectedly weak performance of Geert Wilders’ Freedom Party (PVV) in the Dutch election on March 15 seems to suggest this. Despite predictions running as high as 25% of the popular vote for Wilders, the PVV gained only 13%. If voters in France’s upcoming presidential election prove closer to the Dutch than to Americans and Britons in their susceptibility to xenophobia and protectionism, their decision will have global implications for politics, economics, and the ideology of global capitalism.

A swing back to the center in continental Europe would strongly suggest that the unexpected victories for populist and anti-globalization movements in the US and Britain were not primarily a response to unemployment and disappointing economic performance since the financial crisis, mass migration, or the threat of Islamist terrorism. This conclusion follows from the fact that France has suffered from much higher unemployment and a longer post-crisis recession than either the US or Britain, as well as experiencing more problems with terrorism and Islamic militancy.

If German voters in the autumn follow the French and Dutch in moving back toward the political center, immigration will also be discredited as the root cause of populism. After all, Germany has experienced a much larger influx of foreigners than Britain or the US. Instead, populism will look more like an Anglo-Saxon phenomenon, motivated less by immigration and economic policy than by conservative cultural attitudes among Trump and Brexit voters and the unusual demographic alliances pitting old against young, rural against urban, and university graduates against less educated voters in the US and Britain.

The economic implications will also be far-reaching if the center holds in Europe. The European Union is a bigger trading partner than the US for most emerging economies. And the euro is the only real alternative to the dollar as an international currency. So the EU’s continuing commitment to a philosophy of open trade, globalization, and carbon reduction could be sufficient to prevent a paradigm shift toward protectionism and climate-change denial that seemed almost inevitable with Trump’s election.

Such a change in global leadership would require a dramatic improvement in Europe’s economic performance. Fortunately, that outcome can be expected if voters reject populist politics in France and Germany. The EU has suffered a prolonged economic slump since the 2008 financial crisis, largely because the German government vetoed the kind of monetary and fiscal stimulus that helped to pull the US out of recession in 2010. Germany’s veto on US-style quantitative easing was also the main reason for the near-collapse of the single currency in 2012.

But a dramatic change to European policy and economic conditions occurred in March 2015, when the European Central Bank belatedly launched a bond-buying program similar to America’s,

but on a far larger scale. By purchasing almost three times the total net issuance of eurozone bonds, the ECB effectively circumvented eurozone rules and began to monetize Europe’s government deficits, as well as creating a mutual support system between strong economies such as Germany and weaker ones like Italy and Spain. The ECB’s actions quickly reversed the fragmentation of the European banking system and eliminated fears of a euro breakup. The immediate result was an upsurge in confidence among both businesses and consumers.

By last summer, most of Europe was already enjoying a decent recovery, when renewed fears of disintegration, this time caused by politics, not finance, suddenly overwhelmed the improvement in economic conditions. Brexit and Trump created an expectation that Europe would be the next domino to fall to populism in the looming Dutch, French, and German elections.

Of course, this possibility still cannot be dismissed, which is why international investors remain cautious about Europe. But if the populist victories that worry investors do not in fact happen, a surge of business and consumer confidence will send waves of investment flowing into the eurozone.

The key event will be the final round of the French election on May 7. If this results in a victory for Emmanuel Macron, the centrist front-runner, France will embark on a path leading to at least a modicum of economic reforms.

That, in turn, will create a much more cooperative relationship between France and Germany. Both main candidates for German Chancellor are eager to rebuild post-Brexit Europe by strengthening the Franco-German axis – and the start of a French reform process would reassure German voters that their government, by easing EU austerity, would not merely be pouring money into a bottomless pit.

This brings us to the ideological implications if centrist forces win and economic recovery accelerates in Europe this year. In the immediate aftermath of the global financial crisis, the European “social market” model of capitalism seemed like a logical alternative to the Thatcher-Reagan market fundamentalism that had broken down after 30 years of global dominance. Indeed, President Barack Obama moved the US toward greater government activism in macroeconomic management, financial regulation, environmental policy, and health care.

Paradoxically, however, Europe moved in the opposite direction. Under German pressure, the EU became the last bastion of monetarism, fiscal austerity, and the “disciplining” role of financial markets. The result was the near-fatal euro crisis of 2010-2012.

If this year’s elections result in a centrist French president and a revival of Franco-German cooperation, the EU’s unexpected infatuation with market fundamentalism will probably end. Europe will enjoy a better, more sustainable, and socially inclusive economic recovery than the US under Trump. If this happens, the rest of the world may again start to see the EU as a source of inspiration and a model. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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