

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



May 22, 2018

We Need to Manage Diversity

Living within diversity requires that the inhabitants develop respect and broadmindedness for one another. Without these factors, it might be terribly troublesome to tighten the social bonds. Different societies have inhabitants from totally varied cultural, historical, religious, ethnic or sectarian milieus. Even though these societies have the advantage of being diverse and culturally wealthy, they are noticeably at risk of conflicts, also. As there are teams of individuals with totally different ideologies and practices, there are prospects that there are frequent clashes and disturbances. Therefore, it is necessary in such societies that totally different teams ought to settle for one another's existence.

The open-mindedness for others is best developed by realizing the fact that others have their reasons to be what they are. They need their own backgrounds and values and their own practices that have developed among them through their distinct history. However, people don't seem to be able to do so in such a large amount of cases. They, in fact, become the victims of utmost partisanship. They observe and perceive others in their own views and check out to weigh them as per their own values, that don't offer correct and just result. They base their analysis and understanding depending on their own frame of reference that is certain to be biased as they do not look after the objective truths.

The biased and ethno-centric approach towards others is certain to end in clashes and chaos. Such a state of affairs is actually noticeably prejudicious and might be used by others for their personal benefits. History approves the actual fact that the heterogeneous societies that have had clashes among their completely different strata were dominated by others who solely reinforced those clashes through political means and in that manner pursued their own motives. In short, the societies that have such clashes are politically used by others and that they suffer severe loss as a result.

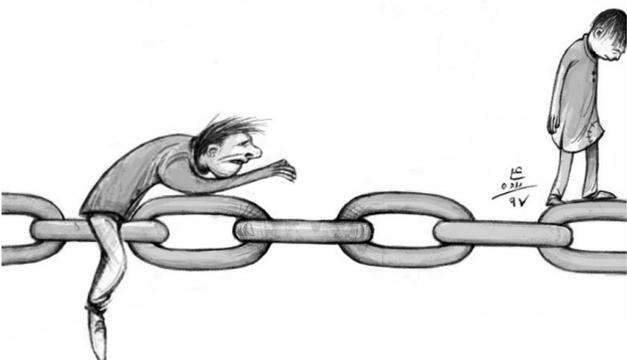
It is, therefore, essential for heterogeneous societies to develop a culture of co-existence. A way of belongingness to an oversized body; may be a sense for attachment to some national feelings, will solve the problem to a particular level. Binding themselves to national levels, the heterogeneous teams within the society might surrender their trivial matters and begin thinking in broader perspective. They need to be instructed to grasp that it's solely through collective efforts that they'll improve their survival potential in today's society. Their collective efforts will grow to be a synergy that may give them the chances of facing the overgrowing challenges of life successfully and dignity.

One of the simplest ways in which to exist in an exceedingly heterogeneous society is searching for the similarities among totally different teams rather than distinguishing the variations and creating them the bone of rivalry. In fact, the similarities among totally different human teams are larger than their variations. One of the biggest similarities among all the groups of people is that they're human beings and share an equivalent earth to survive on. However, such ideas are solely thought of ideal and unworkable. In reality, people are divided into totally different strata and that they have myriads of disparities. There are fights among them and that they use deadly weapons in their fights that kill many at a time. Each cluster, in pursuit of proving itself higher or correct, makes machinations to decimate others. Others are aliens, foreigners, infidels and wrong-doers. Religions and social and political ideologies that have got to bring folks along have, in fact, compelled them to stand largely apart and divided. This can be extremely pathetic and doesn't show in the least that humans are the most superior of creatures and have the intelligence and gumption.

Afghanistan is one among the societies that are heterogeneous to a particular extent. There are people from totally different ethnic groups who have their sub-cultures. Although they have embellished Afghan society with variety; however, there are instances when these strata have had clashes among each other. These clashes resulted in civil wars and influenced Afghan society negatively to a large extent. Other countries that had their interests in Afghan society used these clashes for their political functions and further added fuel to the fire.

However, nowadays Afghan society is standing in a challenging position. It is in the course of developing a peaceful life for its people. At this important juncture, it is extremely necessary that Afghan society should stand united and face challenges as a powerful nation. It should not let the variations among various strata dominate its national integration. The younger generation will play an amazing role in this regard. They are educated and they have previously experienced the implications of decades of instability and wars; so, they will better decide which path to choose.

If Afghan people want to guarantee their national integration within the times to come, they will be tested by the challenges. They have to learn holding one another's hands tightly and assisting one another in nation building. They need to grasp that the varied groups within the country are essentially different elements of a healthy body and while not the support of any of them it might not be able to create the body complete and make it work and perform properly.



Taliban's Response for Repeated Peace-call

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Both national and international stakeholders including Afghan people and religious scholars called Taliban, for ceasefire, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan. People in different parts of the country like Helmand and Kabul walked out urging all parts for ceasefire. The UN office in Kabul also launched an appeal to all sides to stop fighting in Ramazan. Tadamichi Yamamoto, UN Secretary General's special representative for Afghanistan, on the occasion of Ramazan, urged the Taliban and other parties of the conflict to halt fighting. "I sincerely hope that the observation of Ramadan will provide an opportunity for all communities in Afghanistan to come closer to each other and build bridges peacefully. In the same spirit, I would like to call parties of the conflict to respect this religious obligation and halt the fighting," the UN envoy said in his appeal.

The top American commander, Gen. John Nicholson, delivered a Ramazan message for Afghanistan, encouraging Taliban forces to accept the Afghan government's offer and the Afghan people's demands for peace. "In this holy month, we encourage all armed Taliban to accept the offer of His Excellency, the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and join in peace talks, for a better future of their children and the noble people of this great nation," Gen. Nicholson, the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission Commander, said.

These appeals come after considerable successes of insurgent in the battle field and taking lives of Afghan people. They are becoming casualties of war in alarming numbers. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), more than 28,000 civilians have been killed and more than 50,000 injured since 2009. This number does not include thousands of others who died between 2001 and 2008. While some local media reports indicate higher number of casualties than what UNAMA revealed.

As reflected in media reports, in 2017, 3,438 people dead and 7,015 injured — 65 percent of the casualties were attributed to the anti-government elements, namely the Taliban and Islamic State. Twenty-five percent of these casualties have been attributed to the pro-government elements (including 16 percent attributed to the Afghan National Security Forces, or ANSF, and 2 percent to international military forces). Eleven percent of these casualties were attributed to crossfire, and 1 percent to border shelling from Pakistan, while the rest cannot be attributed to any warring parties.

In spite of repeated appeals, Taliban resumed fighting with the Afghan forces, backed by US forces, in western Farah city. Last Monday, Taliban fighters attacked police headquarters in the western Farah province, killing at least 20 members of the security forces. In subsequent clashes, last Tuesday between the Taliban group, armed with heavy weapons, and Afghan security forces at least 25 members of the forces and five civilians were killed in the city. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid

claimed over social media that their forces took over most regime compounds inside the city and intentionally withdrew after achieving all their objectives.

Eventually, their new stance, which was announced last Friday, surprised all the people. They pledged not to target the Afghan police and military in the country any more due to the high number of casualties suffered by the security forces in the ongoing conflict. However, they implied to focus their attacks on Americans and their foreign allies, rather than Afghan government forces justifying its recently spring offensive in the country are on the Americans and their allies, but the security officials often come under fire because they are "protecting the foreign invaders and the corrupt regime which they have appointed." These security forces, however, are our own countrymen who have joined the ranks of America due to misguidance or other reasons," the statement said.

The Taliban have always claimed that they support peace and want to minimize the suffering of Afghans. They declared general amnesty to all military formations, national army, national police, private militia and all employees of the government to safeguard their lives and wealth if they quit the regime. They addressed the government employees, "For the sake of your own lives, for the protection of your children and for deliverance in the afterlife, leave the support of the Americans and accept the invitation by the Islamic Emirate of a life of peace and honor for you and your families." "In case you do leave the enemy ranks ... the Mujahideen of Islamic Emirate shall use every means at their disposal to try and ease your life."

According to a recent BBC study, the Taliban are active in 70 percent of districts, fully controlling four percent of the country and demonstrating an open physical presence in another 66 percent. While according to the latest report by the Special Investigator General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), the Afghan government controls only 56 percent of the nation's districts, which represents the second-lowest level — and the Taliban's highest level — since SIGAR began receiving district control data from the U.S. military in November 2015.

Anyway, people of Afghanistan welcome any steps leading to peace, security and peaceful relations with any world nations but no one seems optimistic because of the past 17 years of painful experience and thinking that peace in Afghanistan is a complex issue involving contrasting actors with different agendas. Therefore, people are extremely tired and wish for a permanent solution to end the hatreds and start love and friendship. On the other hand, if the righteous demand of people continued to be ignored, one day, they themselves will proceed to put an end to the endless play but that would be too costly for all warring sides.

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A Blueprint to Save the Iran Deal

By Guy Verhofstadt

There can no longer be any doubt that "America First" means precisely that. In abandoning the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, US President Donald Trump rejected the advice of allies and showed an utter disregard for the interests of France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the broader international community. French President Emmanuel Macron's last-minute effort to construct a broader diplomatic approach toward Iran was sidelined in the final hour, with little to no explanation from the Trump administration.

As with Trump's other acts of vandalism against the international order — not least his withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement — his sabotage of the Iran deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), leaves it to other countries to pick up the pieces. The decision no doubt delights Trump's domestic political base, which revels in his dismantling of the key achievements of his predecessor, Barack Obama. But the JCPOA was also a major success for the European Union. It was Europeans, after all, who paved the way for negotiations with Iran in the first place. And the deal itself significantly reduces the chances of nuclear proliferation in Europe's backyard. Attempting to justify his decision, Trump recently tweeted, "Remember how badly Iran was behaving with the Iran Deal in place. They were trying to take over the Middle East by whatever means necessary. Now, that will not happen!" But while it is true that Iranian influence has been spreading in the Middle East, there is no good reason to think that unilaterally terminating the JCPOA will suddenly change that fact. If anything, the decision could embolden Iranian hardliners and lead to even more Iranian meddling in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and elsewhere. In fact, almost immediately after Trump's announcement on the JCPOA, Iranian troops stationed in Syria reportedly fired rockets into Israel.

Worse still, Trump has not even bothered to offer an alternative approach to containing Iran's nuclear program. As a result, it is now incumbent on European leaders to step in. To be sure, the threat of US sanctions against European companies operating in Iran leaves the EU with an unenviable choice. But simply giving up on Middle East nuclear nonproliferation efforts is not an option.

Looking ahead, the EU should not limit itself to reaffirming its commitment to the JCPOA. It must seize this moment to introduce a broader strategy toward Iran, one that convinces Iranian leaders to address legitimate concerns about their ongoing ballistic-missile program and disruptive behavior in the region. If successful, a wider approach would also leave the door open for the United States to re-engage with multilateral diplomatic efforts at a future date.

To salvage the nuclear deal and advance other diplomatic goals, the EU can leverage its economic relationship with Iran. The Iranians must be made to understand that only by restricting their missile program and cooperating on efforts to restore stability to the region can they preserve their economic relations with Europe. EU leaders also must make clear that if Iran resumes nuclear enrichment or blocks access to inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the sanctions regime that was in place before 2015 will be reinstated.

At the same time, the EU should assure Iran that as long as it keeps its commitments under the JCPOA, then the EU will protect its companies from US sanctions and the extra-territorial effects of US legislation, as it did in response to US sanctions against Cuba in the 1990s. Providing such protection will be politically and economically costly, to be sure; but the alternative could lead to a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. And European citizens would likely object if the EU suddenly abandoned its principles simply to appease an unpredictable US president. In taking the broader approach outlined above, the goal, as Macron has proposed, should be to conclude a parallel agreement to the JCPOA. But any new deal must go hand in hand with a wider strategy to stabilize the Middle East. Iran, the Sunni powers (led by Saudi Arabia), Israel, Russia, China, and the US must be convinced to stop fueling the region's proxy wars. To that end, it is now up to the EU to lead on diplomacy, and to demonstrate to Trump that multilateralism is far more effective than diplomatic hooliganism.

More broadly, such a strategy could also start to close the deepening transatlantic divide that Trump's presidency has opened up. The fracturing of the West is a welcome development in the eyes of Russian President Vladimir Putin and illiberal regimes around the world. Authoritarians and populists would like nothing more than to sow chaos and loss of confidence in the postwar rules-based international order. The democracies that built that order embody values that are antithetical to authoritarians' interests.

Finally, Trump's JCPOA decision demonstrates, once again, that Europe relies far too much on the US for its security and prosperity. Even by Trump's standards, the savaging of the Iran deal was an astonishing act of diplomatic arson. It suggests that the full-scale operationalization of his "America First" approach is just getting started. Now is the time for Europeans to reclaim control of their own destiny. By strengthening its capacity for defense and global leadership, the EU can advance both its own interests and those of the broader international order.

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