

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

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## Ethnocentrism Played Destructive Role in Afghanistan

Ethnocentrism, racial discrimination, and lack of religious tolerance have led to insurmountable challenges in Afghanistan. A large number of individuals are discriminated on the basis of their ethnic and sectarian backgrounds in collective life.

Discrimination has been deeply embedded in traditional culture of Afghanistan and the bulk of the challenges in the country stemmed from racial, sexual, religious, and sectarian discrimination. That is, ethnocentrism and sectarian orientation have been playing a highly destructive role in Afghanistan.

To view the history, civil unrest and deadly conflict were rooted in ethnocentrism and religious and sectarian orientation. Capitalizing on religious sentiment of the public, Afghan kings had fatwa (religious decree) issued against an ethnic group to justify their acts of violence and killing. To put it succinctly, civil unrest in Afghanistan was painted with the brush of religious and racial color.

The ongoing war in Afghanistan still continues under the mask of religion as radical individuals are seeking to seize power under the same name. They are aware of the fact that Afghanistan has been ruled for decades under religious color and all killings and violence were carried out under ideological term. For example, the Taliban's regime was established on the basis of religious ideology. With this in mind, the militant groups, as they still seek to rule Afghanistan, fear that their ideology will be discarded in Afghan society as it is moving towards democracy and shows tendency to democratic principles. Thus, the militants still claim religious and sectarian superiority and spill the blood of people out of humiliation.

Meanwhile, the term "the Taliban with tie" suggests that a number of individuals cherish the Taliban's parochial mindset despite shaving and wearing suit and tie. They show sensitivity towards women's active participation in the government and discriminate them on the basis of their gender and also spread hatred.

Apart from ethnocentric mindset and religious exploitation of the radical individuals, discrimination exists even within the government's body. That is, ethnic orientation has been a factor in one's appointment in higher political position within the government's body. Even some posts are allocated to a particular ethnic group based on ethnic quota, which suggests that ethnicity outweighs one's merit and abilities. Similarly, some political pundits could not help talking against an ethnic group in talk shows and media outlets.

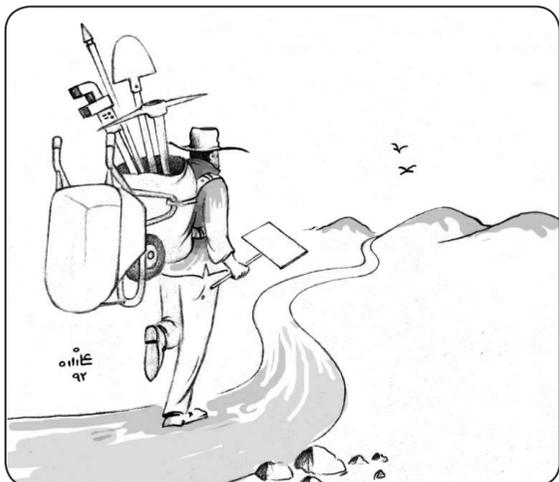
Ethnic, racial, and sectarian discrimination also continues at the grassroots level as some individuals are treated unfairly by others simply for being born in a certain racial or religious background. Some people spread ethnic hatred on social media and hurl vitriolic attack against a certain ethnic group. Since social media is a free and open platform for each and every individual, it is most likely that radical groups capitalize on the polluted air on social media. Practicing on the axiom of "divide and rule", radical groups will pursue their objectives in any possible way. They are believed to fan the flame of hatred and discrimination on social media and exploit public sentiment for the interests of their groups. They will also trigger individuals' feelings against the government through exaggerating a minor issue and airing disinformation. I remember vividly when Afghan soldiers attacked a Taliban's ceremony last year, in which some of their underage students were also killed. Subsequently, the social media were inundated with photos from children - who were killed somewhere else by someone else - to spark off public sentiment against the government. It could outrage the conscience of simple-minded people and would contribute to the Taliban's recruitment since the incident was used as recruiting campaign for them.

It is self-evident that the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) recruited a large number of people from different parts of the world, including US and Europe, online. They were highly active in cyberspace spreading disinformation and radical ideology.

The ISIS group is widely involved in stoking sectarian violence as it has been targeting ethnic minorities in the country. The ISIS is seeking to sow the seeds of sectarianism in Afghanistan so that it could reach its sinister objectives and could resist the disintegration of its group after losing ground in Iraq and Syria.

All groups - notably the Taliban, ISIS, and al-Qaeda - are operating under the mask of religion and exploit religious orientation and racial tendency of the public in Islamic countries in general and in Afghanistan in particular. They killed thousands of people and destroyed the country and justified their ugly acts and sinister faces under a sacred term, which has been highly dangerous.

The destructive role and horrible consequences of ethnocentrism and racial and religious discrimination are widely felt in Afghanistan. That is to say, Afghanistan was the casualty of racial and religious orientation, exploited by many individuals and groups, and bore the brunt of conflict and destruction. Thus, Afghans have to be cautious not to further fall for the bogus claim of radical groups or for their personal sentiment.



## The Return of Takfiri Terrorist Group is Serious Threat to Afghanistan

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Unhappily, the news of appearing Takfiri terrorist group, special IS-K branch on the northern frontiers of the country by Alexander Bortnikov, head of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, and acknowledgment by Scott Miller, the commander of resolute support forces, have newly alarmed security threats in Afghanistan. Mr. Bortnikov said more than 5,000 IS forces that fled from Syria and Iraq have sheltered in the northern borders of Afghanistan and they will be a serious threat to the security of entire region. Scott Miller also said that al-Qaeda is still in some parts of Afghanistan fighting against the Afghan government in coordination with other terrorist groups. In the last days, there were many reports of full coordination between the Taliban and al-Qaeda and the unity of the two terrorist groups.

Unfortunately, the political climate in Afghanistan is so busy with internal issues that such news are easily forgotten and never regain its importance, but we must accept that these news is a misfortune sign for return of another cycle of violence in the country. The above news shows that Afghanistan may once again go to throat of terrorist groups but this round would be worse than what were witnessed in the past. If this happens, and the terrorist groups such as IS-K, al-Qaeda and the Taliban will once again dominate larger parts of Afghanistan, and they will try to display their latest style of violence that have not shown in Syria and Iraq.

However, the presence of IS-K is not a new in Afghanistan; Initially, The Islamic State announced its expansion to the Khorasan region in 2015, which historically encompasses parts of modern day Iran, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Despite initial skepticism about the group's existence from analysts and government officials alike, IS-K has been responsible for nearly 100 attacks against civilians in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as roughly 250 clashes with the U.S., Afghan, and Pakistani security forces since January 2017. Though IS-K has yet to conduct attacks against the U.S. homeland, the group represents an enduring threat to U.S. and allied interests in South and Central Asia. But the recent growth of terrorists groups have not only concerns Afghans but also concerned many of the northern neighboring countries; Earlier a conference for fighting against terrorist was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan; Reportedly, Rajab Ali Rahman Ali, a Tajikistani Frontier Commander said that a large collection of terrorist forces moved to the northern part of Afghanistan border with Tajikistan. He said that more than 29 Taliban bases and terrorists training centers have also moved to the northern provinces of Afghanistan which distanced from 2 to 120 kilo miter from the central countries borders. He added, more than 6235 fighters are trained in these bases and centers while they also

contribute to opium smugglers towards central countries.

Overall, it seems that the Middle East is waiting for new series of events, especially with the increasing tensions between Iran and United States. Any kind of anxiety and clashes in this area will rapidly spread to Afghanistan and will more complicate the situation in our country. Regional and global powers can directly or indirectly use terrorists as a weapon against one and other to strengthen their political and economic interests. But no other area in the region will be better playground than Afghanistan for regional and international actors and the nest of terrorism. Unfortunately, intentionally or unintentionally we have paved the ground for such destructive games. Means, if a piece of cotton easier get fire than a piece of log because it has the talent of ignition. Unfortunately, the same is the case of Afghanistan comparing to other countries due to many reasons.

Some of the regional countries may also contribute to instability in Afghanistan in order to influence the process of political affairs such as election in Afghanistan but no elements can better trouble the water rather than terrorist groups. Over the past several years, the aerial and logistic supports have been secretly provided to extremist groups in some part of Afghanistan but this time, they may send their supported troops under name of IS-K to the Afghan borders. Some of neighboring countries have overtly supported terrorist groups as their citizens and supported groups have been killed and arrested in Afghanistan but they tried to hide the moon with their two fingers. In fact, the real issue is not only returning terrorism because there are enough destructive forces and it might be the return of another cycle of violence and instability in Afghanistan.

The only way to confront the growing power of the terrorist groups is political consensus of all political groups and factions against the terrorist groups centering on protection of the political system and avoid playing personal games which is naturally against the interest of the country. Some of the political games which are ongoing among the internal players might be more destructive than terrorists' attacks. As both terrorists and their supporters have disappointed from confrontation with Afghans that's why they try to provoke ethnic or religious gaps in order to reach their goals. Therefore, all political factions including presidential candidates must be cautious and understand that any move against national unity will have destructive consequences. Unfortunately, we have repeated failed to cross from the ethnic, religious, linguistic and personal criteria but these must be a lesson for future.

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## The Myth of Climate Wars?

By: Alaa Murabit and Luca Bücken

In the years leading up to Syria's civil war, the country endured three consecutive record-breaking droughts. By forcing internal displacement, the droughts arguably contributed to the social tensions that erupted in popular protests in 2011. But that does not mean that the Syrian conflict is a "climate war."

As extreme weather events proliferate, it's becoming increasingly easy to find a link between climate change and violent confrontations. In Sudan, the ethnic cleansing carried out by former President Omar al-Bashir has been tied to the Sahara Desert's southward expansion, which fueled social unrest by exacerbating food insecurity. Territorial disputes in the South China Sea have also been connected to food-security concerns, rooted in competition over access to fishing areas. Some now warn of a "brewing water war" between Egypt and Ethiopia, triggered by the latter's construction of a dam on the Nile River. But the "climate war" narrative is deeply flawed. From Syria to Sudan, today's conflicts are the result of multiple complicated and interrelated factors, from ethno-religious tensions to protracted political repression. While the effects of climate change can exacerbate social and political instability, climate change did not cause these wars. This nuance is important, not least for the sake of accountability: climate change must not be used to duck responsibility for resolving or averting violent confrontations.

Still, military and climate experts argue, climate change is a "threat multiplier," and thus remains an important national security issue. Climate advocates and academics, however, have long avoided or rejected discussions of "climate security" - not to diminish the risks that climate change poses, but because they fear that framing climate change as a security issue will undermine efforts to mitigate those risks, by enabling the incremental securitization of climate action. Securitization is often a political tactic, in which leaders construct a security threat to justify deploying extraordinary, even illegal measures, that infringe on people's rights. If the fight against climate change is securitized, it could, for example, be used to rationalize new restrictions on the movement of people, enabled by and reinforcing anti-migrant sentiment.

Framing climate as a security issue can also challenge already-strained international cooperation on climate governance, while driving investment away from necessary interventions - such as the shift to a low-carbon economy - toward advancing military preparedness. The accompanying apocalyptic discourse, moreover, could well lead to public disengagement, further weakening democratic accountability. Yet, even as some United Nations member states express concern about linking climate change more closely to security, most countries are moving in precisely that direction. In 2013, the American Security Project reported that 70% of countries view climate change as a threat to their security, and at least 70 national militaries already have clear plans in place to address this threat.

The UN Security Council is also becoming more active in the climate

security field. After recognizing the role of climate change in the Lake Chad conflict (Resolution 2349), the Council held its first debates on the relationship between climate change and security, with the participation of a large and diverse group of member states.

Given the impact of climate change on issues like migration and health, decoupling discussions of climate action from national security considerations may never have been feasible. On the other hand, linking climate change to security can positively contribute to mobilizing climate action. The key to avoiding the pitfalls of securitization is to move beyond paradigms - which overemphasize military-focused "hard security" narratives - that continue to shape security policy and public discourse. One way to achieve that is to take a more gender-inclusive approach to conflict prevention and resolution.

Research shows that women are more likely to pursue a collaborative approach to peacemaking, with actors organizing across ethnic, cultural, and sectarian divides. Such an approach "increases the prospects of long-term stability and reduces the likelihood of state failure, conflict onset, and poverty." When women participate in peace negotiations, the resulting agreements are 35% more likely to last at least 15 years. Sustainable peace is possible only by recognizing the necessity of local women's leadership, who have relevant expertise and yet are currently excluded from national and multilateral frameworks. After all, if policy decisions are to meet the needs of the affected communities, members of those communities must have a seat at the table.

For example, in Indonesia, Farwiza Farhan has acquired unique insights from years of facilitating community-inclusive forest conversation that respects local stakeholders. In Somalia, Ilwad Elman has proved her ability to navigate intersectional peace-building efforts through her organization, Elman Peace.

Of course, there is also an imperative to give more women the tools they need to join in this process. The interconnections identified in the UN Sustainable Development Goals provide a functional roadmap for delivering the needed equity. In particular, improving reproductive health (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4) of girls and women is one of the most cost-effective ways both to mitigate climate change (SDG 13) and to empower them as community leaders (SDG 5).

Rather than resisting the securitization of climate, advocates and policymakers should be advancing what the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute calls "the climatization of security." This is best done by using security to increase the salience of climate action, highlighting the shortcomings of current security frameworks, and promoting gender inclusiveness and local leadership as holistic and long-term solutions for fostering local, regional, and international peace.

Alaa Murabit, a medical doctor and Executive Director of Phase Minus 1, is one of 17 Sustainable Development Goals Advocates appointed by the UN Secretary General. Luca Bücken is a policy adviser and strategist who focuses on migration, security, climate, and justice.

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