

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



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The Insensitivity Towards the Wrath of Terrorism

Nothing has influenced Afghan society as much as insecurity and terrorism. The country was turned into a battle ground by super power to show their dominance in the region. Later the civil war targeted the country and made the poor people suffer because of its ugly outcomes. Soon after that Taliban gained power and made the society further suffer backwardness and religious extremism. Both these factors blocked all the ways towards peace and stability.

However, since the downfall of Taliban, there have been expectations that the country would move towards a certain level of stability. But, that does not seem to be coming.

Even today, the country is largely influenced by religious extremism and terrorism. It does not only target the innocent people who suffer because of lack of opportunities for a secure life but also challenge the entire security apparatus within the country. The authorities responsible for peace and security do not seem to have any idea of how to face the overgrowing security challenges; whereas, insecurity and terrorism give rise to many other types of social evils that have the capacity to further disturb the society.

Afghanistan faces huge and massive social issues, primarily due to terrorism as we have openly let the militant groups to carry out their business in accordance to their will. So militancy and anarchy furnish and grow as powerful as a second state or system within the state.

In fact, the different regional players with the help of the extremists in the country sponsored a mindset that flourished the militancy as strategic assets. The seeds that were sown were bound to turn into trees and bear fruits, which currently we are reaping - there are many factions in our country who promote extremism and militancy as the rudimentary and essential ideology.

The so-called clerics condemn the state for the control measures and salute the extremists despite their relationships with the greedy powers, while our government does not have even the courage to curse the extremism explicitly. They have been very lenient to them and have no other option but to be apologetic. Nation is put to the dilemma and paradoxes, only to give time to the so-called reconciliation and peace process, which is nowhere to be seen. What has, in fact, been achieved is growing terrorism, militancy and bloodshed of innocent people.

While cruelty is being silent, giving the misinformation is worse. Where the worst crime is having the responsibility and power to control and still doing nothing. While the response to such a crime is not closing eyes, which we all are doing at the moment.

Despite the knowledge of the truth and false, manipulation of the events as a second theorem is only an eye wash to keep the nation in worse condition and to promote the agenda of the enemy of the nation. The authoritative people in our country need to understand that with great power comes great responsibility.

They have to use their authorities not to dodge the common people but to guarantee for them a better life as they have promised to do so while acquiring their positions.

Some, not all, of the centers of the Islamic education called Madrassas are responsible for feeding the young and empty minds with the garbage of the terrorism, which leads to the militancy in return. These centers were once supported and sponsored by the internal extremists and external players. Taliban at the time of their rule supported and promulgated such centers and used them as their cadre generating institutes. The history is not very kind and it has proved that the lethal weapon of terrorism that was made in our country is now targeting our new generation. The fact is we cannot slay the giant we have fed! But now, the time has reached - the gift of the terrorism that is being exchanged from hand to hand, from the generation to the next, has to be stopped.

This cancer of the nation will be death of the nation unless we take the proper parameters and promote the unity, moderation and education. If we promote harmony and equality to achieve social equity then surely we will get rid of the menace of terrorism. We require strengthening the economy of each individual among the 95% of the nation, rather than strengthening the pockets of the 5% elite, else this cancer will not leave them alive even.

And, then we have to be hopeful that one day, the tears and the blood, the sigh and the hopelessness will bring the change, which will be proved by slaps on face of the cruel and their supporters; this nation will decide who lives and who dies, who is socially evil and who is good, who is responsible and who is culprit. And the day is soon to come when justice and freedom will be restored and all the people of the country will have better opportunities to live their lives with peace and tranquility.



Do not be the Silent Half!

By Fatima Faizi

It is an undeniable fact that women form the half population of society, but nothing has been created to meet their needs. To view stores and markets, the bulk of customers are women who pursue their needs along with their children. However, the atmosphere is masculine. All objects are made on the basis of masculine idea, makers and sellers are men, but customers include men, women, and children. The patriarchal system is one of the reasons behind this fact and the society treat women unkindly and deem them as second class citizens.

Women follow the ruling custom when they hold the position of manager or executive. To ponder upon the issue, those women who hold higher position have been bestowed positive discrimination.

Men do not anticipate women to work at a high managerial level, this will be deemed a disdain for men. In case of an issue between men and women, men will not take the blame despite their mistake and will persist on their righteousness. The question is that where does this mentality originate from?

It is believed that such mindsets will transfer from family to community. Women are known inferior creature in families and girls are treated as interim members who belong to others. This is induced from our folklore as mothers lullaby their children with the same terms.

Being woman is really hard when everything is designed by men and for men, which might seem a symbolic sentence but it is an undeniable fact. There are not as many women as men in public places. For instance, you will hardly know a woman to work as a seller in a market. Only a few women work in private or governmental offices and their social activities are curtailed.

As it was mentioned, things are designed by men's taste and for men. Women's view and understanding are disparate with men's. To desensitize the atmosphere, women's view and need should be involved in designing things, which will be more elegant. Women should represent themselves through their own words. Men have to support them in this respect. Women need to break their silence and express their views about dos and don'ts. If they do not express their views, no one will realize their needs. Unluckily, women show less tendency in taking part in speech

ceremonies. A number of women do not dare express their ideas and deem themselves inferior to men. In short, women tend to be reticent for one reason or another. So, their feelings and need will remain in mystery.

Few days ago, one complained that when his spouse feels angry, she does not state the reason behind her anger and expects her husband to know it. Being angry is a normal practice in daily life but one has to make the reason clear. It is hard to read one's mind. So, anticipating one to soothe our anger without knowing the factor will be unfair and fatuous expectation. Dialogue is the best way in this regard. It is rightly said, "Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself".

This is a small drop from the ocean of examples which is familiar to women and to some men, too. To resolve the issue, women should realize the fact that silence is not a panacea for one's problem. If women are willing to have a share in society's social issues, they have to choose a manner other than silence, which is called rational argument. On the other hand, men also should facilitate women to express their ideas and feelings.

Outlining this issue does not necessarily mean that women are unaware of the condition, but it is because women have not realized to express their thoughts. Being subjugated in the family, they are used to obey and agree without words. In a traditional family, the salient feature of a woman is silence, patience, and obedience, whereas it will harm women, and even men and children in some cases.

I emphasize that women should not expect men to know the contents of their hearts. This is a selfish demand. Although we have been ordered to remain quiet but keeping our mouth shut will not be a solution to our problems. Dialogue and negotiation will solve big challenges. To insist on our silence, the atmosphere and structure will remain patriarchal and we will be marginalized from social issues. It is women to change the current structure through their lofty ambition.

Akiva ben Joseph says, "The tradition is a fence around the law; tithes are a fence around riches; vows are a fence around abstinence; a fence around wisdom is silence."

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The Illusion of Freedom in the Digital Age

By Mark Leonard

Over the last few weeks, media around the world have been saturated with stories about how technology is destroying politics. In autocracies like China, the fear is of ultra-empowered Big Brother states, like that in George Orwell's 1984. In democracies like the United States, the concern is that tech companies will continue to exacerbate political and social polarization by facilitating the spread of disinformation and creating ideological "filter bubbles," leading to something resembling Aldous Huxley's Brave New World.

In fact, by bringing about a convergence between democracy and dictatorship, new technologies render both of these dystopian visions impossible. But that doesn't mean that there is nothing to fear.

Much of the coverage of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) focused on President Xi Jinping's consolidation of power. He is, observers warn, creating an information-age dictatorship, in which the technologies that were once expected to bring freedom to China's 1.4 billion citizens have instead enabled him to entrench his own authority. By providing the government with highly detailed information on the needs, feelings, and aspirations of ordinary Chinese, the Internet allows China's leaders to preempt discontent. In other words, they now use Big Data, rather than brute force, to ensure stability.

And the data are big indeed. More than 170 million face-recognition surveillance cameras track every step citizens make. An artificial-intelligence-enhanced security system can spot criminal suspects as they cycle beside a lake or purchase dumplings from a street vendor, and immediately alert the police. Data surveillance cameras feed into China's "social credit" data bank, where the regime compiles thick files on its people's creditworthiness, consumption patterns, and overall reliability.

The CPC is also using technology to manage its own ranks, having developed dozens of apps to communicate with party members. Meanwhile, it blocks some of the empowering features of technology: by forcing all tech companies to have their servers within China, it effectively "in-sources" censorship.

The impact of technology on American politics has been even more visible, but it is analyzed in terms of the market, rather than the state. Among the most eye-catching stories has been the role that "fake news" played in shaping last year's presidential election. Facebook has admitted that 126 million Americans might have seen fake news during the campaign.

More recently, Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is conducting an investigation into whether US President Donald Trump's campaign colluded with Russia's interference in the 2016 election, charged one-time campaign chairman Paul Manafort with 12 counts - including "conspiracy against the United States" - for his actions prior to the campaign. A foreign policy adviser to the Trump campaign, George Papadopoulos, was also indicted for lying to the FBI about meetings with individuals closely associated with the

Russian government during the campaign, though he has already pleaded guilty and has been cooperating with investigators since the summer.

But beyond such bombshell developments is a broader anxiety about the ability of tech companies to control the information people receive. With Big Tech's secret algorithms determining how we perceive the world, it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to make conscious decisions - what philosophers perceive as the basic dimension of free will.

Big tech companies, worth more than some countries' GDP, seek to maximize profits, not social welfare. Yet, at a time when attention is supplanting money as the most valuable commodity, the impact of their decisions is far-reaching. James Williams, a Google engineer turned academic, argues that the digital age has unleashed fierce competition for our attention, and few have benefited more than Trump, who is for the Internet what Ronald Reagan was for television.

At the same time, the impact of technology on politics is relatively independent of regime type. Technology is blurring the comforting distinction between open and closed societies, and between planned and free economies, ultimately making it impossible for either to exist in its ideal form.

By revealing the US National Security Administration's massive government surveillance, Edward Snowden made clear that the state's desire for omniscience is not limited to China. On the contrary, it is central to the idea of national security in the US.

In China, things are moving in the opposite direction. To be sure, the Chinese government is pressuring the biggest tech companies to give it a direct role in corporate decision-making - and direct access to their data. At the same time, however, the Internet is changing the nature of Chinese politics and the Chinese economy, pushing both to become more responsive to consumer needs.

For example, a friend who worked for the search engine Baidu explained to me how the company tries to enhance the consumer experience of censorship, testing the ways in which people prefer to be censored. Jack Ma of tech giant Alibaba thinks that China can use Big Data to design perfectly calibrated state interventions that enable it to outperform free-market economies. In the coming decades, Ma believes, "the planned economy will get bigger and bigger."

In the digital age, the biggest danger is not that technology will put free and autocratic societies increasingly at odds with one another. It is that the worst fears of both Orwell and Huxley will become manifest in both types of system, creating a different kind of dystopia. With many of their deepest desires being met, citizens will have the illusion of freedom and empowerment. In reality, their lives, the information they consume, and the choices they make will be determined by algorithms and platforms controlled by unaccountable corporate or government elites.

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