

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



November 24, 2016

Our Unconcern towards Social Evils

There have been many evils in human societies that have been disrupting the smooth development and improvement. Though there have been efforts to overcome them, they have kept on existing in some way or the other. They clearly depict that human societies are never perfect and there are always certain shortcomings. It is important to understand those shortcomings and strive to find out the main causes of those evils and their appropriate solutions in order to support the societies move towards perfection.

Though it is a matter of concern that a social evil erupts in a society, more concerning, however, is when the evil keeps on increasing or gaining strength and starts penetrating within social fabrics. One of the basic reasons that any evil gets promoted within a society is the appreciation and support it gets from within the society members. Or there may be indifference on the part of society members towards the evil. Therefore, it is necessary that an evil must be considered an evil and must be treated in the same manner; i.e. an evil must be punished; otherwise it may get out of control very soon.

The example of Afghan society in this regard is very much relevant. There are different social evils that get no proper attention by the members of the society. For instance, the evil of corruption has penetrated deep within Afghan society and most of the institutions in the country are being influenced by it in some way or the other, yet it is not being taken as much seriously as it should be taken. People consider it an integral part of their social life. They complete their tasks through corrupt ways without even feeling guilty. Corruption, unfortunately, is a now a routine. It is no more weird to find corruption; the weird incident is to find someone being honest. Such a social value is really very much pathetic and it has kept on feeding corruption to a great extent.

People's indifference towards corruption around them is really very sad; there has not been any comprehensive movement or there have not been series of protests to condemn corruption within Afghan society. Though there have been many protests and demonstrations on the issues that are not vital for the people of Afghanistan at all, but, unfortunately, the evil of corruption which is crippling the social system within the country has faced no comprehensive protest.

It is common to find people, who complain against corruption, getting involved in corruption easily. It is easier for them to get their tasks done through some bribery and recommendation than to follow the honest, lengthy and tiring process of 'honest means'. They quite easily forget their demands for corruption-free society and higher standards of honesty.

It is not to deny that the people responsible for controlling the corruption must play a role in controlling the corruption, but the importance of social movements is very much vital in facing a social evil. The control mechanism within a society can enforce a law and can control a social evil by force to a certain level but if the society members do not support the mechanism it is very difficult to control the situation. For example, the violence against women in Afghanistan has been identified as social evil by the control mechanism, yet it has not been controlled as Afghan society is not yet ready to accept it as social evil. The society members do not consider it inhuman and unlawful to carry-out violence against women. It is very much normal in patriarchal Afghan society to find husbands beating their wives, fathers beating their daughters and brothers being violent to their sisters. And when there are cruel incidents of violence against women, the society members, except few, do not come to the roads to protest and shun such incidents as social evils. Same is the case with the evil of drug use. The people of Afghanistan use drugs as if they are part of their normal lives. People use it as painkillers and as medicine to fight against cold weather. Though in some cases people do so because they are not fully aware of their negative consequences but at others they just do so because they are totally indifferent towards the issue.

They know that using such drugs may lead them towards negative consequences, yet they are not ready to avoid them and find out ways of getting rid of them. It is really imperative to note that the sustainability of any social evil within the society largely depends on the attitude of the society members towards the evil. If from the very beginning the society members realize that social evils are negative and they are hindrance for the development of the society and may generate problems for them, there are possibilities of fighting the social evils properly, but if the society, either due to ignorance or negligence or individual considerations, remains indifferent towards evils, it would be very difficult to control them. Therefore, it is necessary that as a part of society, we must feel our responsibility and be very much vigilant. It is our responsibility to rise against the social evils, stand against them and raise our voice. Unless we respond to those evils we do not have the right to complain about them and we do not have any way of avoiding them.



The Sacrificial Lambs of Terrorism

By Hujjatullah Zia

In recent months, the stories told by Afghans have been sad ones that have largely to do with deaths. We have counted the death of individuals who fell victim to terrorism. The emergence of the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) compounded the political instability through ushering in sectarian violence.

The ethnic minority groups are seriously left at the mercy of terror. The pictures of men, women and children lying in the streams of blood spread a deep sense of fear and disappointment in the air. Not only has the shadow of the sudden deaths of innocent people inculcated a deep sense of paranoia in those who have lived, it has ripped the fragile threads of national unity, religious tolerance and general civility.

Afghanistan, along with Pakistan and Syria is, reportedly, among the top five countries most hit by terrorism. The Monday attack on a Shiite mosque, Baqir Al-Uloom, in Chahar Qala area of capital Kabul, which left at least 32 dead and more than 60 wounded behind, was claimed by the ISIL group. ISIL carried out attacks in 28 countries in 2015, up from 13 the year before.

It may be only one of the world's 274 terrorist groups, but it is the most deadly. Similarly, ISIL carried out two attacks during the Shiite ceremony of Ashura in October 11 in Kabul and in October 12 in the northern province of Balkh, that altogether killed at least 32 people. The group also claimed responsibility for the attack, took place in July 23, against a demonstration by mainly Hazara Shiites in Kabul, killing at least 85 and injuring 413, the deadliest attack in Afghanistan on civilians since 2002.

It is believed that Afghanistan has borne the brunt of terrorism within the two past years. The last year "spring offensive" and this year's "Omari Operation" of the Taliban and ISIL's firm foothold in the country heightened the graph of soldier and civilian casualties. Based on national media, around 3,285 people have been killed and wounded in 193 attacks across Afghanistan only last month, showing a 35 percent increase in assaults and 83 percent hike in casualties, compared to September. In September, 1,065 people were, reportedly, killed and 727 others wounded in 143 clashes and attacks in 27 provinces.

According to a report, the OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, which include mostly developed Western nations, saw a huge increase in the number of terrorist attacks.

These countries, which include the United States and France amongst others, saw a 650pc increase in the number of deaths in such attacks.

Twenty-one of the 34 OECD countries saw at least one act of terror, with the most attacks taking place in Turkey and

France. In 2014, there were 18 deaths from terror attacks in OECD countries. In 2015, this number had increased to 313 deaths from 67 attacks. In the US, 98pc of terror attacks were carried out by single individuals who may or may not have declared allegiance to IS but who did not have any direct contact with the organization.

Following the Monday attack, Human Rights Watch (HRW) asked the National Unity Government (NUG) to develop a security plan to better protect the minority Shiite sect during high-profile public events.

"ISIS has stepped up its horrific and unlawful attacks on public gatherings, making no place safe. The government, Shia leaders and civil society groups should work together to develop appropriate ways to improve security during vulnerable public and religious gatherings so that Shia community members can exercise their basic rights," a senior Afghanistan researcher at HRW Patricia Gossman is cited as saying.

Not only is this outlook unrelated to the sort of attacks being witnessed in most of these countries (it is said 98pc in the US are carried out by single individuals), it also makes cooperation on the collective project of fighting terrorism all but impossible.

Moreover, Afghans have to treat one another with the spirit of brotherhood regardless of one's sect, race and creed and practice religious tolerance in the society. With the message of peace and brotherhood, one day we will be able to overcome instability and become united against our common enemy.

It is worth saying that the more divided we remain the more pain and sufferings we will sustain. Stoking sectarian violence is a project being implemented by the ISIL fighters. They seek to segregate the nation on the grounds of their racial and religious background. Although Afghans maturity is appreciable, there are still grounds for being attracted towards the radical ideology of the ISIL, particularly in the tribal belts located on the Afghan-Pak borders. Thirdly, the clergy are not to remain silent. They will have to raise their voice against the radical ideology and inhuman and anti-religious practices of warring parties, who desecrate the mosques through spilling the blood of worshippers and mourners.

They are to illustrate the peaceful message of religion to the public and beware them of radical practices and religious intolerance - which are the main reasons behind the current challenges. Moreover, the government will not have to underestimate the issue of sectarian violence as the seed is being sowed by warring factions, it will lead to horrible consequence.

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America and the World in Transition

By Richard N. Haass

In less than two months, the American political transition will be over. The 45th president of the United States will settle into the Oval Office. President-elect Donald Trump will become President Trump; President Barack Obama will join Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush as a living former president.

Speculation about Trump's likely foreign and domestic policies is rampant, but little if any of it is meaningful. Campaigning and governing are two very different activities, and there is no reason to assume that how Trump conducted the former will dictate how he approaches the latter. We also do not yet know who all the principal advisers will be and how (and how well) they will work together.

But amidst this uncertainty, there are some things we do know. The first is that Trump will be greeted by an inbox piled high with difficult international challenges. To be sure, no single problem compares with the Cold War at its height, but the sheer number and complexity of difficult issues is without precedent in modern times.

Topping the list will be the Middle East, a region in an advanced stage of unraveling. Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya are all dealing with a mix of civil and proxy wars. The Iran nuclear pact at best manages one aspect of Iranian power, and only for a limited duration. The Islamic State (ISIS) may lose its territorial dimension; but it, along with other groups, will continue to pose a terrorist threat for years to come. The plight of millions of refugees constitutes not just a humanitarian tragedy, but also an economic and strategic burden to countries in the region and in Europe.

And Europe is already confronting many significant challenges, including Russian aggression against Ukraine, Brexit, the rise of populism and nationalism, and low rates of economic growth. Turkey poses a special problem given its increasing illiberalism at home and mercurial behavior abroad. The fact that Syria's Kurds have proven to be America's best partner against ISIS adds to the complexity of the foreign policy choices that await.

East Asia's stability is jeopardized by China's rise and strategic ambitions, North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile advances, and a host of contested maritime and territorial claims. In South Asia, there is renewed tension between India and Pakistan, two nuclear-armed rivals with a history of conflict. Just as uncertain is the future of Afghanistan, where more than a decade of international involvement and

assistance has failed to bring about a capable government or quell the Taliban and other armed opposition groups.

Closer to home, oil-rich Venezuela has many of the characteristics of a failed state. In Africa, too, a mix of poor governance, low economic growth, and terrorism, civil war, or both is overwhelming many countries. And at the global level, few if any rules or penalties for reckless behavior apply in important domains (cyberspace being paramount among them).

While campaigning isn't the same as governing, Trump's campaign has added to the difficulties he will face. By running on a platform of "America first," Trump has raised questions among America's allies about the wisdom of continued reliance on the US. The apparent demise of the Trans-Pacific Partnership has created unease in Asia and South America about US predictability and about whether the US will remain a champion of global trade or embrace something closer to protectionism. Mexico, singled out for criticism by Trump during the campaign, faces a unique set of issues concerning both trade and immigration.

The incoming president and those around him will come under pressure to address all these issues and concerns quickly, but they would be well advised to take their time. The priority for now and for months to come ought to be to staff up the new administration. Some 4,000 positions must be filled. The new administration will also need to learn to work together and review existing policies before it can decide on new ones. There will be considerable focus on - and expectations built up about - the administration's first hundred days. But there is nothing magical about the first hundred days of a 1,460-day presidency. It's better to get things done right than to get them done by Tuesday.

Other governments would be smart to do more than watch and wait for the new US administration to sort itself out. Allies need to consider what more they might do on behalf of common defense. They can develop and share their ideas about how best to deal with Russia, China, ISIS, North Korea, and Iran. Similarly, they can begin to think about how to protect and promote global trade in the absence of new US-led accords. In this new era, the balance between global order and disorder will be determined not just by US actions, but also and increasingly by what others long aligned with America are prepared to do. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Richard N. Haass is President of the Council on Foreign Relations and author of the forthcoming book *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*.



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