

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



October 29, 2017

ISIL – A Stain on Human History

The warped mind and cruel practices of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi were revealed to the world. The ISIL militants, both ideologues and mercenaries, played a highly destructive role in the Middle East and left a large number of casualties and great debris behind. Their inhuman practices will fill one with strong sense of hatred and disgust.

The ISIL group, which is believed to practice upon the Salafi school of thought, had no mercy to men, women or children. ISIL militants sought to shed as much blood as possible and rape as many girls and women as possible, which are the flagrant violation of rights and dignity. In other words, although human rights and dignity are deemed inherent, inviolable, and inalienable in international instruments, they were trampled upon in the worst possible way by militant fighters and religious fundamentalists, especially ISIL. Moreover, human rights and dignity are also inviolable on the basis of religious tenets and moral code, neither of which is respected by militants.

According to reports, as pro-government troops drove ISIL fighters from a central Syrian town over the last weekend, the retreating militants killed scores of civilians, dumping some bodies into wells and leaving others in the street. The apparent mass killing is the latest example of the brutal reprisals that have taken place when territory changes hands in Syria's multisided war, with civilians often bearing the brunt of the pain. The carnage showed how the ISIL can still spread havoc even as it loses major parts of its territory that once included large areas of Syria and Iraq.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the conflict, said that as many as 128 civilians had been killed in Qaryatayn in the past several weeks before the ISIL fighters retreated.

The ISIL grew out of an insurgency in Iraq and was affiliated with Al Qaeda until 2014. The militant group shocked the world in June 2014 as it seized control of more than 50 places, including Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city. Over three years, the group achieved military dominance in critical places in almost every province in Syria and across northern and central Iraq. But in 2017, the ISIL's losses drastically accelerated, and the militants are now returning to their insurgent roots.

The ISIL carved out a sprawling territory across Iraq and Syria through military dominance over 127 important places. The group governed the residents of dozens of cities and towns, and it benefited from their taxes. The militants also had control over strategic locations, like military bases and border crossings, as well as economic assets, like oil fields and dams.

Almost two weeks ago, United States-backed forces pushed the ISIL group out of Raqqa, the group's de facto capital, dealing a heavy blow to the militants. The offensive began in June and left widespread destruction, displacing about 270,000 residents. United States-led coalition airstrikes there were "reportedly killing hundreds of trapped civilians every month".

In July of this year, the Iraqi government announced that it had finally retaken control of Mosul after three years of ISIL rule and a brutal nine-month battle. Mosul held huge symbolic value for the group. It was there, in June of 2014, that al-Baghdadi declared a caliphate after his fighters took control of Mosul and swept through other parts of northern Iraq and Syria, seizing dozens of cities.

The ISIL's remaining strongholds in Iraq fell quickly after Mosul was retaken. Tal Afar, near Mosul, was captured by Iraqi forces in an offensive that lasted just 11 days. And this month, the militants barely put up a fight in Hawija.

Despite these dramatic losses, analysts say that ISIL is not defeated. An estimated 6,000 to 10,000 militants remain in Iraq and Syria. The ISIL group has been shifting tactics and returning to its insurgent roots. Some analysts believe that the group will continue to have some local support and the ability to lodge attacks throughout the region.

ISIL militants are a potential threat to Iraq and Syria and will carry out terrorist attacks in public places. However, they will not be able to reorganize systematic attacks against the two countries. After all, the ISIL loyalists emerged in Afghanistan and Pakistan before its defeat. Hence, they dreamt of gaining foothold destabilized countries and extend their influence. But their dream will not come true as the ISIL network was dismantled.

To sum up, the ugly face and sinister objectives of ISIL were uncovered to the world. They respected neither religious tenets nor international instruments. This should be an eye-opener for the entire nation and no states must leave room for radicalism and no individuals are to fall for the bogus claims of militants since they transcended moral restrictions and religious values. So, this group will be a stain in human history.



Higher Education and National Development

By Mustafa Ahmadi

In modern age, the world seeks to consider the role of education, particularly higher education, in national development and educational progress. The paramount role of higher education in a country's development is inevitable. Taking the status quo into account, it must be pointed out that universities are one of the highly significant resources in human societies. Resolving issues and determining macro strategies at national level are done by universities and the knowledgeable in both developed and developing countries. In the countries where higher education is taught in new methods, progress will take place more swiftly.

Kabul University was established in the solar year of 1311 with the aim of empowering human resources in accordance with the country's need and pave the ground for national development. Currently, a number of more institutes of higher education are operating, along with Kabul University. The question is that what role will be played by institutes of higher education in terms of national development and what are the achievements of Kabul University in this regard?

Creative manpower is believed to be the most deciding factor behind a society's development and progress which is different from one community to another. That is to say, a country's supremacy depends more on its technological advancement – which is the product of educational development and relates to a country's system of higher education – rather than natural resources or industrial capacities. So, considering the importance of higher education in national development, the relation between higher education and elements of national progress will be analyzed shortly.

Higher Education and Economic Development

The system of higher education and universities are effective in economic development from two perspectives: First, providing efficient manpower or increasing efficiency. Second, extending the realm of knowledge, skill, and technological advancement. Since universities are supposed to shoulder the responsibilities of nurturing manpower and increasing efficiency at higher level, they play a pivotal role in economic development. On the other hand, since expanding university knowledge is in need of financial resources – which are the product of economic development – this is one of the challenges before development in the country. In short, economic development and educational extension are interlinked but both are at a low level in Afghanistan.

Higher Education and Development of Human Asset

It is stated with full certainty that expert and skilled human resources are the mainstay of social and economic development. Indeed, expert manpower is the real factor behind evolution and progress. Discerning the law ruling on the pheromone of a society or nature will smooth the path for evolution. Talented individu-

als will promote the capacity of a society in resolving social and economic issues and catalyze its progress. Such individuals will be trained under the organized teaching of modern science. But our universities do not only lack modern science but the system of higher education will also fail to move continuously.

Higher Education and Social Development

Social development is a process that updates social structure and creates new institutions which will cause stronger solidarity within a society. Subsequently, universities as a formal system in higher education of the country, will change the minds and mentalities of individuals. Those mentalities will shape the public social and political characteristics and build the future of people. Lacking great and successful ideologues, the institutes of higher education could not bring about social development. So, Afghanistan was left at the mercy of imported ideas and thoughts impeding its progress.

Higher education and cultural development

The extension and fruition of ruling culture will be one of the important aspects of national development. According to some economists, development in economic aspect is strongly influenced by cultural beliefs. Cultural development is defined as promoting capacity and creativity in the values and behaviors applied in the daily life of mankind. To reach this pinnacle, teaching texts at higher level should contain creative messages. Some thinkers believe that generating creativity and changing the minds of the public are the responsibilities of universities and institutes of higher education. The post-Taliban Afghanistan was not successful in this case, either.

Higher Education and Political Development

Political development is defined as institutionalization of politics in the society. There are links between political and educational systems in many countries but with differences. The relation between the systems of higher education and politics seems to be dialectic since this relation can be both supported and criticized; otherwise, political development will not occur in a society. In fact, higher education will play a crucial role in the elements of political development namely nation, state, and civil society and can facilitate access to a sustainable political development in the society. In Afghanistan, however, the relation between the system of higher education and government is really weak. Hence, there is no political development. In brief, universities play a key role in a society's development in all aforementioned fields. But more than half century has passed from the establishment of first university in Afghanistan, its role was not played as it should have. The country's universities are in need of fundamental reform for catalyzing the process of national development.

Mustafa Ahmadi is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at the outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Trump's Republican Collaborators

By Nina L. Khrushcheva

After nine months of Donald Trump's presidency, the leaders of the Republican Party appear finally to be waking up to the harsh reality that their country stands at the edge of an abyss. They now have a choice: they can either continue to collaborate with Trump, thereby sustaining his destructive leadership and courting disaster, or they can renounce him, finally putting their country's democracy ahead of loyalty to their party/tribe. Recent statements by a Republican senator from Tennessee, Bob Corker, suggest that the tide is turning against Trump. Corker sniped that, "the White House has become an adult day care center," before warning that Trump's Twitter threats may put the US "on the path to World War III." Similarly, Senator John McCain warned of the threat posed by a "half-baked, spurious nationalism." But true political honor demands more than veiled condemnations (McCain did not mention Trump by name in his speech), or simply quitting, as Corker and Senior Republican Congressman Pat Tiberi of Ohio are doing. Rather, it calls for crossing the political aisle, as Winston Churchill (no doubt a hero to all of them) did, when he switched from the Liberal to the Conservative Party.

As Churchill demonstrated, there is no shame in shifting political allegiances. There is, however, shame in loyalty to a disgraced or deplorable party or cause. And any Republicans today who think they can delay breaking definitively with Trump, without irreversibly damaging their own reputations, should recall the fate of others – in the Soviet Union in 1917, in Germany in 1932, and in Russia and Turkey today – who thought they could tame a monster.

Consider Nikolai Bukharin, a favorite of Vladimir Lenin and the editor of Pravda. For more than a decade after the Bolshevik Revolution, Bukharin tried to reconcile his academic understanding of "the dictatorship of proletariat" with its real-world implementation. This wasn't so difficult while Lenin was in charge: despite the bloodshed the new regime engendered, mass murder wasn't its main purpose or source of energy.

That changed with the arrival in power of Joseph Stalin, for whom terror was both a means and an end. Nonetheless, Bukharin aligned with Stalin to purge Leon Trotsky and other Bolsheviks who sought to adhere more closely to Lenin's dictates (and his testament against Stalin). Bukharin reasoned that Stalin's methods were enabling the Soviet Union's rapid development into an industrial power, and the future of communism was far more important than the loss of a few thousand lives – or even a few million. Bukharin would soon regret that reasoning. Once Trotsky was out of the way, Stalin turned on all the other senior Bolsheviks, calling them "enemies of the people" – a phrase that Trump's populist supporters, like United Kingdom's headline Brexiteers, have revived to denounce anyone who dares challenge their "blood and soil" code. Bukharin was executed in 1938.

Franz von Papen also bet that he could tame a dictatorial demagogue. To advance his own political ends, Papen persuaded German President Paul von Hindenburg to appoint Adolf Hitler as

Chancellor in 1933. A seasoned and autocratically inclined politician, Papen thought that, once Hitler was in power, he could control the Nazi leader, whom Papen regarded as a provincial blowhard. Instead, on the Night of the Long Knives, the Nazis hunted and executed Papen's trusted associates, Herbert von Bose and Erich Klausener, and seized control of the government. Papen's fate was kinder than Bukharin's, though: Hitler shipped him off to serve as ambassador to Austria and then to Turkey. After World War II, Papen was acquitted at the Nuremberg trials.

Boris Berezovsky, Boris Yeltsin's trusted oligarch-henchman with his own murky reputation, similarly underestimated a would-be autocrat. It was Berezovsky who brought Vladimir Putin to Yeltsin's attention, anticipating that the diminutive ex-KGB officer was the ideal candidate to protect the Yeltsin family's riches – and Berezovsky's own wealth – once Yeltsin retired. Yet soon after Putin was in power, Berezovsky lost his business empire and was forced to emigrate to England, where he ultimately died under suspicious circumstances.

Finally, in Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his predecessor Abdullah Gül worked together to create the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has dominated Turkish politics since 2002. But, as Erdoğan has concentrated power in his own hands, he has silenced Gül. Likewise, former Prime Minister and AKP leader Ahmet Davutoğlu long supported Erdoğan, until deepening disagreements – at times rooted in Erdoğan's contempt for the very position of the prime minister – forced Davutoğlu to step down last year. Of course, America's democracy is stronger than that of Turkey or Russia. But with his shameless lies and relentless attacks on those who disagree with him – and his recent suggestion that it might be appropriate to "challenge" a major US news network's broadcast license – Trump has shown that he is not interested in adhering to democratic norms.

A weakened democracy is an exceedingly high price for the US to pay – and for what? At first, Republicans wanted to use Trump to help them pass legislation such as a repeal of the 2010 Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare") and tax reform. But, after ten months of controlling the presidency and both houses of Congress, Republicans have accomplished almost nothing legislatively. At this point, it seems that they simply want power for power's sake – and that means beating, not cooperating with, the Democrats.

But that may be changing. Congressional Republicans have already joined with Democrats to enact "Trump-proof" sanctions against Russia, and lately there have been moves toward cooperation on maintaining the subsidies on which Obamacare depends (after Trump cut them by executive order). These are steps in the right direction. But, with Trump's behavior becoming increasingly capricious and dangerous, it is not nearly enough. Republicans who care about ending up on the right side of history cannot stay on Trump's side any longer. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Nina L. Khrushcheva is Professor of International Affairs and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at The New School and a senior fellow at the World Policy Institute.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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