

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



September 01, 2019

## Conflict Leads to Human Rights Violation

Annually, thousands of Peace Day events take place around the globe, many programs are held to promote peace, and Nobel Peace Prize laureates make speech to show the world their work has not been finished, however, peace still remains elusive and warring factions continue killing innocent individuals and violate their rights and liberty flagrantly.

Afghanistan is one of the countries which bears the brunt of militancy. Democracy is undermined by terrorist networks. The strong-willed Afghan administration left no stone unturned to bring the Taliban to the bargaining table. The constant peace offerings by Afghan government have been refused and the Taliban guerillas, along with other terrorist factions, play their destructive role in the country through targeting men, women and children for ideological reasons or on the basis of one's race and religion.

Lack of acceptance and religious tolerance are believed to be the main reasons for the escalated militancy. Warring factions shed the blood of people voraciously due to their warped minds and aggressive ideology. They claim racial and religious superiority and believe that killing would be the only choice – this mentality necessarily belongs to the radical ideologues. On the other hand, mercenary fighters practice upon no ideology and play with the life of individuals just for the hack of it. That is, there are some natural evils as violence runs in their blood. Such ilk of fighters seeks to harm people for pleasure.

Afghan administration played its role positively through offering the Taliban olive branch with the hope to bring in peace, strengthen democracy, and protect the rights and liberty of the citizens. The government intends to form “a civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination as well as violence, based on rule of law, social justice, protecting integrity and human rights, and attaining peoples’ freedoms and fundamental rights,” as it is stated in the preamble of Afghan Constitution. The country's constitution was approved on the basis of Islamic tenets and cultural facts and the Taliban elements are urged to stop bloodshed and practice upon this constitution.

President Ashraf Ghani administration has formed its negotiating team for talks and waiting that the Taliban leadership will negotiate with the team as soon as their talks are finalized with the US representatives. Afghans hope that the US-Taliban talks will lead to sustainable peace in the country. But there is still ambiguity in the talks and contradictory statements are made in this regard by both the Taliban and US officials.

For tireless efforts within a decade for peace and stability in the country, Afghanistan should not have been sidelined in the talks ongoing for ninth rounds between the US representatives and the Taliban leadership.

It is self-explanatory that the inherent and fundamental rights and freedoms of people were violated by warring factions and the main reason behind the talks is to support peace, which will ensure the individuals’ rights and liberty. The horrible consequences of the conflict is clear. Afghans paid highly heavy casualties as a result of the indiscriminate attacks carried out by the militant fighters, mainly those of the Taliban.

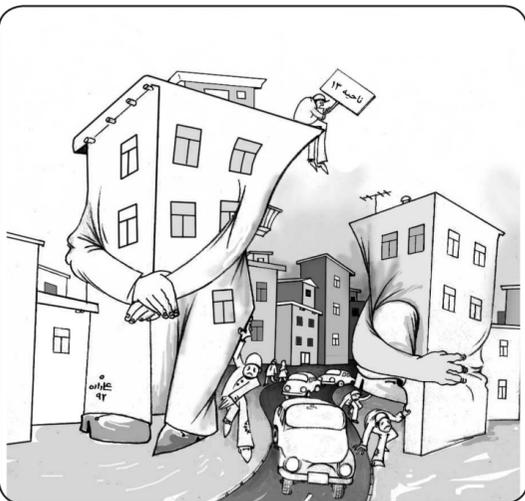
The violation of human rights and humanitarian law has prevailed in Afghanistan for decades, particularly after the Taliban's regime and continuation of their militancy. The Taliban fighters pay no heed to individuals’ human rights.

Meanwhile, women, who suffered severely during the Taliban's regime, are worried if their rights are compromised at the peace table and if the Taliban enter the country with their radical ideology.

Needless to say, civilians have nothing to do with war and must be safeguarded against violence regardless of their racial, religious or linguistic backgrounds. In addition to civilians, detainees and wounded soldiers should not be tortured or humiliated. Warring factions must act on the basis of humanity and ethical code – for being human – if not religious tenets. Killing civilians will do nothing other than revealing their barbarity and increasing the public pain and anguish.

Martin Luther King has aptly said, “Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends up defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.”

Since all parties have come to the conclusion that war encountered a deadlock and the issues should be resolved through negotiations, the negotiating sides should not bargain much at the table. It is recommended that war criminals should be brought to justice after peace deal is signed between the negotiators.



## International Forces: At The Crossroads of Complete or Incomplete Withdrawal from Afghanistan

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

In the eve of signing peace agreement between US and Taliban, there are great uncertainties whether the U.S. and its allies leave Afghanistan in clutches of terrorist's networks or responsibly and gradually leave the country. Therefore, some of the Afghan people appealed US officials through formal and informal letters in order not to leave the country but others seems happy as the foreign forces are to leave the country hoping to end the world increasing political competitions in Afghanistan. The uncertainty mainly rooted in paradoxical positions of US officials on complete or incomplete withdrawal of US forces from the country.

According to Trump's latest position, the US will always be in Afghanistan – while he had promised the American people to end the useless war in anyway. Based on his previous position, his chief negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad worked on a plan for an almost total withdrawal, but as Trump said on Thursday, the U.S. would “always” have a “presence” in Afghanistan. As pointed out, Zalmay Khalilzad, is trying to quietly iron out with the Taliban and the Afghan government a deal that could include an almost complete withdrawal of American troops by the 2020 election.

As US Media indicates, initially the demand for the complete withdrawal plan came from the Oval Office earlier this month when President Trump told his advisers and cabinet officials that he wanted completely out of the country by the time he took the stage at his last campaign event in 2020. The plan is ruffling feathers inside the Trump administration as senior officials in the Department of Defense and also inside Afghanistan, the Afghan government pushed the U.S. to keep some forces in the country for the foreseeable future. Now, Khalilzad is under pressure to please all sides, including the many factions of the Taliban, which has long demanded that all foreign troops leave the country.

Some of the US officials have continuously pushed for the total withdrawal of troops but in the other times they expressed different ideas. Seemingly, the dual positions indicate that the US main strategy requires staying but Trump wants to use the withdrawal as a way of proving his foreign policy bona fides in the lead-up to the 2020 election. Anyway, to unite the dissimilar positions and please the Taliban negotiators, it seems that the U.S. envoy is trying to formalize the details of the 14-month plan and considering whether to leave a small contingent of residual forces in the country, potentially in an advisory capacity.

According to experts, the peace deal should not be based on a blind trust but it must contain clear requirements and commitments that are subject to clear outcome in the future. Any potential deal should bring together all sides for negotiation, enable a useful stay or withdrawal of American forces, and ensure the security of the country

and the region. But it's unclear how much of these negotiations will be fully consummated. Off-and-on talks with the Taliban have been going on, in one form or another, over the course of a decade. And it's not at all apparent that every faction of the Taliban will adhere to a deal, even if one is proclaimed.

Meanwhile, one of the Taliban's main demands from the US negotiator is the total withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. As reports quoted, some senior officials in the upper echelons of the Trump administration national security apparatus say as long as the U.S. enacts strict protocols and monitoring, a plan for an almost complete drawdown can proceed. The U.S. has to give the Taliban enough for the group to feel comfortable promoting the fact that it achieved the withdrawal of troops “But at the same time we need to make sure that the Taliban doesn't just wait it out and then go take over swaths of land and implement their own.”

Anyway, the latest position expressed by US and NATO officials confirmed that the international forces are going to reduce not fully withdraw. Accordingly, the withdrawal plan need to be conditions-based and would allow the U.S. to change course on troop levels if the parties reneged on any part of the agreement, which has yet to be finalized. Some of the conditions floated in the ongoing conversations include the Taliban committing to adhering to the country's constitution, upholding women's rights, and agreeing to continuously engage in good-faith talks with officials in the Ghani government.

The latest Trump's position is coordinated with latest NATO positions as a day before NATO Senior Civilian Representative for Afghanistan, Nicolas Kay, said that international forces will remain in Afghanistan even after a peace agreement in order to support the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. “Let me assure you very very clearly, NATO is not leaving, NATO is committed to staying and supporting Afghan national defense and security forces,” Mr. Kay said. Some 14,000 US troops have remained in Afghanistan within the framework of NATO Resolute Support Mission (RS) to train, advice and assist the conventional Afghan security forces.

Thus, other top US officials believe that it is too early to talk about a full American troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. As reported quoted, Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that any U.S. deal with the Taliban will be based on security conditions on the ground and that Afghan forces aren't yet able to secure the country without help from allied forces. “I'm not using the withdraw word right now,” Dunford said. “It's our judgment that the Afghans need support to deal with the level of violence” in the country today.

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## Two Systems, One World

By: Joschka Fischer

With the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall approaching, the issue of freedom has returned to the fore in Moscow and Hong Kong, albeit under very different historical and political circumstances. We are reminded that the modern era was built on freedom, and on the recognition that all people are born equal. This radical Enlightenment idea, when it took hold, constituted a break from all previous history. But times have changed. In the twenty-first century, we are confronted with a fundamental question: Could a modernized form of authoritarianism represent an alternative to liberal democracy and the rule of law?

In 1989, the obvious answer to that question would have been no, not just in the West but around the world. Since then, however, we have witnessed the revival of nationalism in Europe, the failure of the Arab Spring, the election of US President Donald Trump, Russia's relapse into revanchism, and the emergence of a global China. Now, all bets on liberal democracy are off.

China's emergence as a second military, economic, and technological superpower suggests that there is now an alternative development model. In modern China, the rule of law and democracy are regarded as a threat to one-party rule. Hence, the ongoing protests for freedom and democratic accountability in Hong Kong expose a division not just between two normative frameworks, but between two systems of political power.

For a while, China appeared to have found a formula for bridging this divide. The principle of “one country, two systems” was supposed to allow for the orderly reintegration of Hong Kong and (more aspirationally) Taiwan. Should this formula now fail in Hong Kong, there will be an immediate escalation of military tensions across the Taiwan Strait, because the island's continued special status will become impossible for the Chinese government to accept or ignore.

Still, the formula has indeed worked so far. Hong Kong has become extraordinarily important to the Chinese economy, because it provides access to global capital markets and serves as a financial gateway for inward foreign direct investment. And the relationship with Taiwan has, for the most part, remained relatively quiet.

The arrangement with Hong Kong worked because the government in Beijing showed ample consideration for the city's semiautonomous status. But as China has grown stronger, its perception of itself as a new global superpower has produced a change in behavior. The Chinese authorities are exerting ever more influence in Hong Kong, suggesting that they want to move in the direction of “one country, one system.”

The proposed law (since suspended) to enable the extradition of people arrested in Hong Kong to mainland China was widely seen as a threat to democracy and the rule of law in the former British colony. The authorities in Beijing know perfectly well that this attempt to weaken Hong Kong's autonomy – not covert operations by foreign intelligence services – is why millions of people have taken to the city's streets.

Given the current power structures in China (and Russia), the mass protests this summer in Hong Kong (and Moscow) have little to no chance

of success in the short term. Yet they are significant nonetheless, because they provide a foil for the democratic malaise that has spread throughout the West.

More broadly, the division of the world into two systems immediately brings back memories of the Cold War. But in that conflict, the main issue was military strength – hence the centrality of the nuclear-arms race. When it came to living standards, the Soviet Bloc never really had a chance (as was obvious in the so-called Kitchen Debate between then-US Vice President Richard Nixon and the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, in 1959).

The competition with China, however, will be precisely about the question of which system delivers more in terms of technological and material progress. China's ascent from a poverty-stricken developing country to an economic powerhouse is one of the greatest achievements of the modern era. Millions of people have been lifted out of poverty and into a growing consumption-oriented middle class, and millions more could soon follow them.

At the same time, although China has been building up its military, it has not exerted force beyond its immediate neighborhood, unlike the Soviet Union. When China pursues its strategic interests in Africa and Eastern Europe, it does so through economic and financial means. It owes its growing global influence not to its military, but to its economy and its growing capacity for rapid technological innovation. For the West, the “Chinese Challenge,” then, is to show that its model of democracy is still better suited than Eastern-style authoritarianism for the majority of humankind.

In this larger contest, US President Donald Trump is something of a Chinese Trojan Horse. Although he is waging an aggressive trade and technology war against China, he is also doing everything he can to undermine the credibility of the Western model. In historical terms, his attacks on democracy will prove far more consequential than his tariffs. Making matters worse, Europe, with its obvious economic weaknesses and geopolitical naiveté, is also failing to marshal a defense of the Western model. At this stage, China's ascent cannot be prevented. The country is simply too large and too strong to be boycotted or contained; at any rate, the Chinese people's desire to share in global prosperity is entirely legitimate. The West has little choice but to maintain good relations with the new superpower, while at the same time defending its values. The rise of China – and of the Chinese system – will inevitably create more competition, and these new rivalries must be handled peacefully at all costs. A world with eight billion people cannot afford a global conflict.

Whether China's model of authoritarian modernization can succeed in the long term is a question for future generations of Chinese. Those with no memories of past horrors such as the Cultural Revolution may simply regard the Chinese model as a matter of course. But the modern age was built on liberty. As we have seen in this summer in Hong Kong and Moscow, that lesson will not be forgotten anytime soon.

Joschka Fischer, Germany's foreign minister and vice chancellor from 1998 to 2005, was a leader of the German Green Party for almost 20 years.



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