

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



September 12, 2019

11 September, Tragic Reminder of Neglecting Terrorism Threats

Leaving alone Afghanistan was one of the biggest mistakes of the international community in 1990s. When the Soviet Union troops withdraw from Afghanistan, the international community assumed its mission achieved and left Afghanistan alone with different Jihadi groups mainly backed by Afghanistan neighbors and regional powers; these groups and their supporters had contradicting political and religious agendas. It was evident that sooner or later, they will fight against each other to fulfill the agenda of their supporters.

At the same time, among these groups there were leaders who pushed for their ethnic and religious rights; ethnic and religious marginalization has been one of the main policies of Afghan dictators in the past and it was one of the main causes of civil war in 1990s; because the new Mujahidin rulers pursued the same discriminatory policy against certain ethnic and religious groups in the country.

As a result, the interference of the neighboring and regional powers, pushing for discriminatory agendas by the new government and existence of ethnic and religious armed groups contributed to an overall civil war in Afghanistan that took the lives of thousands of Afghans. Further, these factors contributed to changing Afghanistan to one of the safe havens of the terrorist groups in the region. Al-Qaeda was one of the major terrorist groups being harbored in the country. Al-Qaeda played an active role in supporting Taliban to overcome other Afghan armed groups. At the same time, it played an active role in fueling religious conflicts in the country. Al-Qaeda helped Taliban capture Mazar-e Sharif and massacred about 12000 people during 3 days.

Sadly, the international community considered all these tragedies in Afghanistan as an internal issue; and they deliberately neglected the terrorism threats that were nourished in Afghanistan by Taliban and their affiliate terrorist groups.

As such, the tragic 11 Sept attacks were staged and masterminded by Al-Qaeda from Afghanistan that Taliban played a great role in facilitating this tragic event. The tragic 11 Sept, must remind us of the date of the worst terrorist attack on the United States of America and one of the deadliest days ever on American soil. It also must remind us that neglecting terrorist threats make us to pay huge costs; both financially and the lives of the loved ones. These terrorist attacks that killed nearly 3,000 in the United States and catapulted the country in the age of terror must have a clear message to the international community and the US that, they must make very calculated and cautious decisions about Afghanistan if they do not want events such September 11 happen again.

September 11, 2001, was in fact one of the most tragic events and trying days in the history of the United States and Afghanistan, and the memory of what happened and what was lost must not fade quickly or easily. And just as we should always remember the devastation of that time, so too should we always remember the way the international community left alone Afghanistan and how they paid for it. The last but not the least, Afghans shall keep in mind that why September 11 was masterminded here and must take all the necessary measures not let the terrorist groups to play with their honor and reputation again.

Human Rights Violations Continue Unabated

By: Hujjatullah Zia

The scourge of war and terrorism has caused indescribable sorrow and immense suffering for nations and violated the rights and liberties of many individuals around the globe. Deadly acts by radical extremists have struck a blow to regional and global peace leaving little room for the spirit of brotherhood. With relentless conflicts, "freedom from fear and want" remains an unattainable dream. Despite the fact that all nations have reaffirmed their "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom", as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, people's pain and suffering continue unabated. Life has turned too cheap. Human rights discourse, national and international conferences with the aim of alleviating public sufferings and reducing violence have not been a panacea for our problems. Modern world left men at the mercy of greater threats i.e. more destructive weapons. Nuclear powers menace one another. Men's lust for power has whetted their appetite for further bloodshed. Moral values are in decline and altruistic feelings are moribund.

Worst of all, the emergence of modern terrorist networks blackmails the entire world. People of any race and religion are targeted violently by militant fighters.

Tragic stories about human fatalities no more carry weight and one's heart is no more melted with human catastrophes, which have been changed into daily practices. That is, the vacuum of philanthropy that used to be a serious issue and the void of true soul of democracy are greatly felt in human societies. The soulful stories of war victims fall on deaf ears.

To advocate for human rights and extend the room for tolerance and peaceful coexistence, the world will have to adhere to the "community of shared future" or "shared prosperity". In other words, building a violence-free society where all people can exercise their rights and liberties is possible only through global efforts.

One will remember vividly the image of 3-year-old Syrian boy Alan Kurdi who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea on September 2, 2015. The photo shocked the public conscience regardless of religious, racial or ethnic background. It demonstrates that we live in the global vil-

lage and one's pain and sufferings will hurt the feelings of all nations around the world.

Practicing upon the "golden rule" is a blueprint for building a peaceful and harmonious society. The golden rule says that one must be treated on the basis of being human - no matter what faith and belief they cherish or which racial or ethnic background they belong to. This truth transcends nations and peoples and beats in the heart of billions. Meanwhile, the world has to follow the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which advocates human rights, gender equality and the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, all believed to be the root of common prosperity for human societies.

Human societies should seek to safeguard human rights and dignity. It must be noted that only military action will not mitigate the current challenges, we need to pursue peace and security through non-violent mechanism.

Human rights norms are deeply rooted in ethical codes and moral conscience. Fundamental rights and freedoms are based on moral standards. Thus, morality is the mainstay of human rights and humanitarian law. It is said that the principle of respecting human dignity is the cornerstone of humanitarian law. To view the globally accepted principles that are based on humanity and universal ethics, individuals and human societies need to practice upon them so as to put an end to violence and atrocities. Indeed, if we do not observe international instruments, ethical code, or humanity, people will suffer inhuman treatment and violation of their rights and dignity.

It is self-explanatory that if the world does not promote the spirit of brotherhood, religious tolerance, and racial acceptance, the bleeding will continue and fill people with sense of revenge. The ongoing catastrophes around the globe are the tragedy of our century.

Martin Luther King, a Nobel Laureate, said, "In spite of these spectacular strides in science and technology, and still unlimited ones to come, something basic is missing. There is a sort of poverty of the spirit which stands in glaring contrast to our scientific and technological abundance". With this in mind, the vacuum of moral values have to be filled or else war and conflict will simply compound the pain and suffering of mankind.

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Ursula von der Leyen's To-Do List

By: Daniela Schwarzer

When Jean-Claude Juncker became European Commission President five years ago, he confronted formidable challenges. But the test faced by his successor, Ursula von der Leyen, is even more complex.

As von der Leyen underscored in her "agenda for Europe," one of her top priorities must be to carry out "a new push for European democracy." She can strengthen the European Union's democratic legitimacy in two ways: on the output side, by making sure that the EU delivers on citizens' expectations at a time of rapid change and escalating external challenges, and on the input side, by fostering constructive cooperation with the European Parliament.

Yet, today, the European Parliament is highly fragmented and polarized, making a stable, pro-European coalition difficult to build. In order to pass legislation, von der Leyen will need the support of the Conservatives and Social Democrats, as well as robust and productive working relationships with the Greens and the Liberals. She will probably have to form flexible coalitions in specific areas, which will be time-consuming and increases the risk of political failure on contentious issues.

After the recent elections, for the first time in the European Parliament's history, pro-European factions - the conservative European People's Party, the Social Democrats, the Greens, and the Liberals - met to create a cross-party political program. But the process stalled, as the Parliament could not agree on its own candidate for the office of Commission President, and a four-party "coalition agreement" is no longer on the table.

Von der Leyen should nonetheless engage the Parliament politically as much as she can, beginning with the priorities included in the mission letters that she will send to commissioners. These priorities should be shaped by discussions with the newly elected chairs of the parliamentary groups.

Fostering constructive cooperation with the European Parliament will require credible implementation of a de facto right of initiative for the Parliament, regular dialogue with the President, and the enduring commitment of every single commissioner. Von der Leyen must be able to rely on her team to help her navigate the complex political environment not only in the Parliament, but also in the European Council, and to guide her efforts to engage the European public in a debate on the EU's future.

That is why von der Leyen must ensure that when tailoring the commissioners' portfolios, inter-institutional relations are given sufficient weight. In the previous Commission, Vice President Frans Timmermans handled such relations as part of his vast portfolio. In the new Commission, inter-institutional relations - together with democratization - should form a commissioner's full portfolio.

That commissioner's task would be hugely important, and thus should be undertaken by an experienced policymaker - ideally someone who has worked at the national and European levels, in the European Par-

liament and with the Council. Given von der Leyen's party affiliation, a Social Democrat would be a good choice, though whoever is chosen would need to be able to work across party lines.

Working directly with von der Leyen and the Commission's vice presidents, this commissioner should manage overall relations with the European Parliament and the General Affairs Council, while also helping to coordinate each individual commissioner's interactions with the Parliament. This portfolio would include preparation of the Commission's annual and pluri-annual programs and, in particular, its joint declaration with the Parliament on annual legislative priorities.

Moreover, given the portfolio's lack of policy specialization, this commissioner could support von der Leyen in handling particularly urgent, controversial, or otherwise delicate issues - such as migration or eurozone reform - that require extra political effort to enable progress. Such a commissioner could also ensure that actions in internal and external policy areas - from the common foreign and security policy to engagement with Europe's broader neighborhood - are coherent.

Finally, this commissioner would play an important role in helping to implement one of the priorities von der Leyen has outlined in her agenda: the Conference on the Future of Europe, which is supposed to deliver results as early as next summer. This ambitious endeavor - in which the public, civil society, and European institutions will participate on an equal footing - will require careful preparation and stewardship, not least because von der Leyen wants the European Parliament, Council, and Commission jointly to define its goals and scope in advance.

In this and other areas, the stakes are higher for both the Commission and the Parliament than they were during the previous term. Delivering the tangible results that citizens are demanding will require leaders to master rapidly changing policymaking conditions, characterized by rising internal EU skepticism and intensifying external pressure, including interference from outside actors like China. Transformative technological change and monumental threats like climate change compound the challenge.

In this context, the European Commission and the Parliament should be more motivated than ever to cooperate. This should include annual reviews of priorities by the Commission, in collaboration with the Parliament, to assess progress and identify necessary action.

Such a process has become all the more important at a time when EU member governments are losing patience with supranational decision-making. Unless EU institutions prove themselves, member governments may be tempted to circumvent them and cooperate within smaller groups, for the sake of efficiency.

Ensuring effective cooperation with a fragmented European Parliament will not be easy. But it is possible, especially for a Commission that places the highest priority on doing so, while enhancing its own legitimacy by leading a broad public debate on Europe's future. That is the Commission von der Leyen must build.

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