

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



September 25, 2017

Potential for Further Insurgency

Despite the fact that the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) group has lost ground in Iraq, there is no light at the end of the tunnel. With the overthrow of a militant party, another threat emerges and keeps the cycle of violence moving. If IS dismantles, the 28-year-old son of Osama bin Laden is likely to capitalize on the vacuum and unify terrorists around the globe. The son of Osama's third wife Hamza bin Laden who is called as the "crown prince of jihad" will carry much weight among al-Qaeda.

Hamza pays homage his father and his elder brother Khalid in an audio released in August 2015, and asks militants around the world to "strike from Kabul to Baghdad, from Gaza to Washington, London, Paris and Tel Aviv".

After a year, he said, "If you think you will not be held accountable for the crime in Abbottabad, you are mistaken."

It is feared that the credibility of Hamza bin Laden, whose name is put on the blacklist of "international terrorists" by the US State Department, will be used by the masterminds who are orchestrating the ongoing war and militancy. Similar to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the IS leader, Hamza will be a pawn in the political game to continue the proxy war.

The credible individuals among terrorist networks are potential threats and might change into monsters that would be able to menace the world. For instance, the Taliban's leader Mullah Omar, who started his militancy with a small bunch of local seminary students, led a regime for almost five years, Osama bin-Laden established al-Qaeda in 1988, and al-Baghdadi led the IS group, all of which sent threat to the world and inflicted heavy casualties on many nations and irreparable loss upon human societies. Up to now, the world suffers from these groups and the 'war on terror' which began to respond to the September 11 attack came to stalemate.

Underestimating the potential threats and small movements led to deadly and destructive issues. The aforementioned three groups that came to existence with incredibly small movement sought to pursue their political objectives through instigating sectarian violence. In other words, their ideological conflicts changed into political and full-scale war that engaged the entire world.

To view the casualties of the war, noncombatants sustained heavy fatalities from both sides, i.e., militants and anti-terrorist air strikes. For instance, the UN said in July that there have been 70 people more civilian casualties in Afghanistan from American airstrikes in the first six months of 2017 than in the first half of 2016. In Iraq and Syria, at least 55 percent of all civilians killed by airstrikes since the air war began in August 2014.

When the US President Donald Trump vowed in his speech two weeks ago to "lift restrictions and expand authorities in the field," he signaled that he endorses further harm to noncombatants. On the other hand, a number of civilians lose their lives in terrorist attacks and suicide bombings on day-to-day basis in many parts of the world. The rights and dignity of people are violated on the grounds of their races and religions.

It is self-explanatory that terrorist networks wage war under sacred terms and the violence-oriented individuals, mainly those who live in tribal belts, fall for their bogus claims which are tinged with religious charms. Ideological war is believed to be the deadliest in human history. The aforementioned groups operated under the mask of religion and religious ideology and, therefore, lasted for years. They colored their deadly war with religious sanctity so as to instigate public sentiments and justify their harsh practices. Now Hamza, the son of al-Qaeda's spiritual leader, seeks to capitalize on the charisma of his father and will continue the religious war ushered in by Osama bin Laden. Indeed, the radical mainstream will toe the line in this regard.

It is really tragic to see that the militants, who operate under sacred terms, close their eyes to the fact that non-combatants are the sacrificial lamb of war and militancy. The greater tragedy is that this bloodshed is carried out under religious sanctity.

Hence, to put an end to this war, the world will have to figure out and eliminate the masterminds behind the scene, the potential threats, and the root causes of militancy. But if this mysterious hand which facilitates the war is not cut, militancy will continue unabated. It is also worth saying that with potential threats such as Hamza bin Laden, there is also potential for the establishment and emergence of other groups similar to IS and al-Qaeda.

After all, the vacuum left by the IS militants in Iraq or Syria should not be allowed to be filled by a similar group or else it will undo the struggles made for combating terrorism. Undoubtedly, terrorist networks, with any ideologies or political objectives, menace the world and spill the blood of men, women and children indiscriminately. Since the world is embroiled in this issue, counterinsurgency is in need of a global campaign.



Political Rhetoric will Fuel Tension

By Hujjatullah Zia

Terrorists and extremists have gathered strength and spread to every region of the planet. Rogue regimes represented in this body not only support terrorists but threaten other nations and their own people with the most destructive weapons known to humanity...we meet at a time of both of immense promise and great peril. It is entirely up to us whether we lift the world to new heights, or let it fall into a valley of disrepair," these words were spoken by the US President in 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly last week, 19 September.

Donald Trump underlined peace and prosperity for all nations and urged the world to stop terrorism and destroy the terrorists' safe havens. He also talked about de-escalation of the Syrian conflict and migration challenges and wished for "a future of dignity and peace for the people of this wonderful Earth."

Despite his concerns over the flagrant violation of human rights and the issue of extremism, he made no mention, in his speech, of the Rohingya Muslims suffering severely under the Buddhist majority in Myanmar. But recently, reports say Trump told the UN Security Council to take "strong and swift action" to end violence against the Rohingya.

In his first address to the UN, Trump said that he would "totally destroy" North Korea if it threatened the US and its allies, and called Kim Jong-un a "rocket man" on a "suicide mission." Earlier, he condemned North Korea's spate of intercontinental ballistic missile tests. In a rare statement directly attributed to North Korea's leader, Kim said Trump is "unfit to hold the prerogative of supreme command of a country." Moreover, Trump's words prompted Koreans to rally in Kim's support on Saturday.

It is self-explanatory that nuclear arms will pose serious threat to the world. All nations have to learn lesson from the two deadliest wars in human history that inflicted indescribable sufferings and large fatalities upon mankind. The main philosophy of formation of the United Nations and endorsement of international instruments, after World War Two, was to put an end to global war, reduce the sufferings of mankind, and respect the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. Currently, the threat of chemical weapons and nuclear arms on the one hand and the issue of terrorism on the other hand have spread strong fear and hatred among nations. That is to say, the unmitigated militancy and bloody conflicts in many parts of the

world are despicable for all nations. The tragic stories of war victims are a blow to human conscience.

After all, the cold war among heads of states also generates public fear. In this critical time, the issue of terrorism and civil wars must be addressed to protect the rights and dignity of mankind stated in the United Nations Charter. The civil conflicts in Syria, the racial and religious discrimination imposed on the Rohingya, the terrorist attacks and suicide bombings carried out in terrorist-stricken countries, etc. shed streams of blood. So, it is neither a time for testing ballistic missile nor for exchanging aggressive words, but time for combating terrorism globally. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has called Trump-Kim's rhetoric "the kindergarten fight between children" adding to "calm down the hot heads." But it is believed that this comparison is unrealistic and kind of underestimation of the issue.

President Trump rightly said that it is human societies to "lift the world to new heights, or let it fall into a valley of disrepair". If terrorists continue laying eggs, the world will be plunged into the abyss of instability. What if terrorist groups find access to chemical weapons or the weapon of mass destruction? Do you not think that the world will fall into the frightening valley of disrepair? If human societies launch a global campaign against terrorism and target their safe havens, rather than exchanging furious words, the world will be lifted to new heights. The UN must involve in addressing civil conflicts through peaceful means of negotiation or imposing sanctions on countries which are deaf to the world' repeated calls for stopping violence. The ninth round sanctions imposed on Pyongyang by the UN Security Council earlier this month to counter North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missiles programs is worthwhile and a peaceful approach. If negotiation does not bear the desired result, imposing sanction will be the only peaceful way to reduce the problem.

The UN needs to beef up global peace and stability so as to mitigate the sufferings of human societies. Peace will not be possible unless terrorism and radicalism are rooted out and their safe havens are ruined. All nations must play their role in terms of security issues, at least for their own protection. Thus, it is time for all nations to centralize their attention and energy on reducing militancy and political tensions. It is hoped that the world leaders will realize the sensitive time and decide tactfully.

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Germany's Hour

For the European Union to work, its strong members must be prepared to show solidarity with its weak members. And as long as Germany, the strongest of them all, opposes creating some mechanism to realize this imperative, the EU will limp from crisis to crisis - probably shedding members along the way.

By Robert Skidelsky

Who runs the European Union? On the eve of Germany's general election, that is a very timely question.

The standard reply is, "The EU's member states" - all 28 of them. Another is, "The European Commission." But Paul Lever, a former British ambassador to Germany, offers a more pointed answer: Berlin Rules is the title of his new book, in which he writes, "Modern Germany has shown that politics can achieve what used to require war." Germany is the EU's most populous state and its economic powerhouse, accounting for over 20% of the bloc's GDP. Determining why Germany has been so economically successful appears to be elusive. But three unique features of its so-called Rhineland model stand out.

First, Germany has preserved its manufacturing capacity much better than other advanced economies have. Manufacturing still accounts for 23% of the German economy, compared to 12% in the United States and 10% in the United Kingdom. And manufacturing employs 19% of the German workforce, as opposed to 10% in the US and 9% in the UK.

Germany's success in retaining its industrial base contradicts rich countries' standard practice of outsourcing manufacturing to locations with lower labor costs. But Germany has never accepted the static theory of comparative advantage on which this practice is based. True to the legacy of Friedrich List, the father of German economics, who wrote in 1841, "the power of producing wealth is therefore infinitely more important than wealth itself," Germany has retained its manufacturing edge through a relentless commitment to process innovation, backed by a network of research institutes. Its export-led growth has given it the benefit of increasing returns to scale. The second feature of the German model is its "social market economy," best reflected in its unique system of industrial "co-determination."

Along among the major advanced economies, Germany practices "stakeholder capitalism." All companies are required by law to have works councils. Indeed, large companies are run by two boards: a management board and a supervisory board, divided equally between shareholders and employee representatives, which take strategic decisions. The resistance to offshoring is therefore much stronger than elsewhere, as is a willingness to restrain wage costs. Finally, there is Germany's firm commitment to price stability. Germany needed no lessons from Milton Friedman on the evils of inflation. They were already hard-wired into its most famous post-war institution, the Bundesbank.

Lever suggests that it was as much the memory of the currency collapse of 1945-1948 as of the hyperinflation of the 1920s that drove home this lesson. Likewise, an aversion to public deficits mirrors the population's resistance to private indebtedness. Institutionally, the EU has become Germany writ large. The Commission, the European Parliament, European Council, and the European Court of Justice mirror the decentralized structure of Germany itself.

The EU's gospel of "subsidiarity" reflects the division of powers between Germany's federal government and states (Länder). Germany ensures that Germans fill the leading positions in EU bodies. The EU rules through its institutions, but the German government rules those institutions. Yet talk of "hegemony," or even "leadership," is taboo in Germany - a reticence that stems from Germans' determination not to remind people of their country's dark past. But denying leadership while exercising it means that no discus-

sion of Germany's responsibilities is possible. And this inflicts costs - especially economic costs - on other EU member states.

Germany has created a system of rules that entrenches its competitive advantage. The single currency rules out devaluation within the eurozone. It also ensures that the euro is worth less than a purely German currency would be.

The EU's recent Treaty on Fiscal Union - the successor to the Growth and Stability Pact - prescribes binding legal commitments to balanced budgets and modest national debt, backed by supervision and sanctions. This precludes deficit finance to boost growth. And Germany's insistence that non-wage costs be equivalent throughout the EU is less a device for enhancing Germany's competitiveness than for reducing others'.

The EU, especially the 19-member eurozone, thus functions as a vast home base for Germany, from which it can launch its assault on foreign markets. And that base is strong. Germany exports to the EU 30% more than it imports from it, and runs one of the world's largest current-account surpluses.

This is a benign rather than a brutal hegemony. But at its heart lies a massive contradiction. National accounts must balance. A surplus in one part of Europe means a deficit in another. The eurozone was established without a fiscal transfer mechanism to succor members of the family who get into trouble; the European Central Bank is prohibited from acting as lender of last resort to the banking system; and the Commission's proposal for Eurobonds - collectively guaranteed national bond issues - has foundered on Germany's objection that it would bear most of the liability. Germany has been willing to provide emergency finance to debt-strapped eurozone members like Greece on the condition that they "put their houses in order" - cut social spending, sell off state assets, and take other steps to make themselves more competitive. The Germans see no reason to take measures to reduce their own super-competitiveness.

What can be done to achieve a more symmetric adjustment between Europe's creditors and debtors? Barring a fiscal transfer mechanism, John Maynard Keynes's 1941 plan for an International Clearing Union might be adapted for the eurozone. Member countries' central banks would hold their residual euro balances in accounts with a European Clearing Bank. Pressure would be simultaneously placed on creditor and debtor countries to balance their accounts, by charging rising interest rates on persistent imbalances.

An EU clearing union would be a less visible intrusion on German national interests than a fiscal transfer union would be. The essential point, though, is that for the eurozone to work, the strong must be prepared to show solidarity with the weak. Without some mechanism to realize that, the EU will limp from crisis to crisis - probably shedding members along the way. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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