

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



December 07, 2015

Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire

In retrospect, the conflagration and massacre of the dark days of war by Taliban's regime will never fade into oblivion. Afghan people recoil with fear and hatred whenever the sad memories of the militants' callous actions flash through their minds. Widows still wince at the memory of how harshly their husbands were beheaded and the tearful eyes of orphans bespeak of the regime's heinous crime. Likewise, the painful wounds of mothers' hearts are bleeding for missing their dears and the anger of revenge is boiling up inside the victims' party. The nightmarish image of the bloody incidents and tragic death of innocent people is too difficult to put into words.

In spite of amnesty declared many times by government for Taliban's prisoners, the plight of instability and suicide attacks by Taliban-led insurgents does not only remain unabated but also rapidly increasing in intensity. It is believed that the Taliban's prisoners release is not a panacea for the current instability which is going on in the country.

According to common knowledge, maximum of Afghan citizens also evinced disinterest in Taliban's prisoners' release, however, the will of former President were not only foisted upon the citizens but also on their representatives.

It is a matter of concern when the great and continuous kindness of Afghan government meets inflexibility of Taliban. It has been experienced that Taliban and like-minded groups ungratefully bite the hand that feeds them. As a result, in spite of Afghan government's demand, to join government through democratic means and accept constitution, Taliban militants targeted civilian and innocent Afghans on many occasions. Hence, they are pushing the security situation in political turbulence.

There is no clear outlook for political officials about the outcome of the Taliban's release. This is a highly complicated scenario. Most officials foresee that the released militants will rejoin their groups for reorganizing terrorist attacks in Islamic countries, especially Afghanistan. But the policy adopted by Afghan President is in the intention of accelerating peace process.

It is beyond a shadow of a doubt that the legitimacy of government is under question and Taliban still treat the country as a puppet government. They have always refused to sit on the table of negotiation with Afghan officials. Furthermore, they will never give up terrorist acts and terrorizing Afghans.

It seems very naïve and self-deceptive to release the militants' prisoners, despite their denial to accept negotiation. How paradoxical! The more terrorist acts escalate and the demands for peace talk are denied, the more militants are released and the tone for negotiation softens. Many deals with Taliban for peace process met debacles and further exchanges or amnesty will not bear fruit either. It is feared that this so-called peace process will make the government face abortive outcome or, at least, political stagnation.

The history of Taliban's regime is replete with violence and blood. Likewise, the hearts of people are fraught with excruciating pain and bitter memories of the dark days of the war. The perilous ghost of horror and terror is haunting the minds of the regime's survivors. In other words, it is very disgusting to remember the ugly image of cruelty and bloodshed enforced by Taliban militants and many questions remain Isn't it a right thing if those terrorists released stand on trial for being guilty of many innocent civilians' murder? What about those who missed their family members? What about many more people who are staying behind bars for no clear fault or not having anyone to release them? The questions remain unanswered or maybe nobody knows about policy.

Releasing enemies debilitate the political structure and destabilize the country day by day. There is no assurance if released militants will not join their ex-groups again for reorganizing attacks in the country. If it happens so, our political officials will be going to the wrong path with the intention of stabilizing the country. Moreover, if this last try bears bitter fruit, then there will be no other way left for political officials other than launching a heavy military operation against terrorists with the help of the international community.

Even though, it's being expressed pessimistically concerning the release of Taliban's prisoners. But it should be mentioned here that it is too hard to foresee the exact outcome of the issue. But, considering the current situation of the country and past experiences, one will conclude with the same opinions. In other words, as security is the basic right of a citizen, people are deprived of this asset and falling victim for terrorist act every day. The graph of violence is very high in the country. Taking the past into consideration, the officials were deluded by the fatal conspiracy of the militants which resulted in the loss of thousands of innocent Afghans.

Save Humanity not the Political Gains

By Dilawar Sharzai

Human beings, in the struggle for their survival, have gone to every possible extreme. They, both individually and in the form of some groups, have proved the Darwin's Theory of "Struggle for survival and survival of the fittest" correct in human society as well. There have been clashes and wars among human beings for the sake of the same survival. These clashes and wars have given rise to the invention and proliferation of different sorts of weapons. These weapons, highly modernized because of the development in science and technology, can prove fatal to millions of people upon their use. This has already been proved by the nuclear weapons used in Hirushima and Nagasaki in 1945. Though there have been considerable efforts since the incident regarding the non-proliferation movement, the world is still threatened by the uncontrollable strength of nuclear energy.

The research for the development of nuclear weapons basically started in World War II when the then powerful nations of the world turned violent in order to subjugate each other. The countries like the United States, United Kingdoms, Germany, Japan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic all were in competition with each other to design a way to turn nuclear energy for use in evil intentions. But the only country that used it for the first time was the United States. Afterwards, USSR tested its nuclear weapon in 1949, the United Kingdoms in 1952, France in 1960, People's Republic of China in 1964, India in 1974, Pakistan in 1988 and North Korea in 2006. There are some other countries as well, which though have not gone for nuclear tests, are believed to have acquired the capability. Though the people around the world seem to have realized the extent of its destruction, they are yet to exclude the world from the possibility of a nuclear war.

Today all the major countries in the world and the United Nations Organization have been striving for some sort of Nuclear Non-proliferation. Nuclear non-proliferation is basically aimed at stopping and/or checking the growth of nuclear weapons, fissile material, and weapons-applicable nuclear technology and information by different countries. This is more directed towards the states which are not yet recognized as "Nuclear Weapon States" by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

This is basically discriminatory as the countries are divided into "Nuclear Weapon States" and "Non-nuclear Weapon States". The countries that acquired the nuclear weapons prior to 1968 are considered as the "Nuclear Weapon States" and are above any sort of sanctions, while the other countries (Non-nuclear Weapon States) which may strive to acquire, must go through severe scrutiny by those states. The basic question at this instant is, "Why are the other countries not allowed to have nuclear weapons, as they are threatened by the nuclear power of the 'Nuclear Weapon States'?" There can

be a comprehensive discussion on the matter and there can be different answers but the only idea that stands true is that the nuclear weapon in possession of any country can be a threat to the world.

The efforts to control the proliferation of nuclear weapons started soon after the World War II, as the destruction in Japan called for urgency on the part of international community to guarantee survival in the times to come. The first step in that regard was the Baruch Plan in 1946. This Plan was named after the first US representative in the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) during the Truman Administration. The Plan was too strict and called for the verifiable dismantlement and destruction of the US nuclear arsenal. It drew its contents from Acheson-Lilienthal Report of 1946. This Plan could not be put to practice. Another considerable contribution was made by US President Eisenhower through his "Atoms for Peace" proposal, which led to the education of thousand of scientist in nuclear science for the purpose of using it for peaceful objectives, but most of the same scientists were afterwards involved in the secret nuclear programs in their countries. However, the Atoms for Peace proposal led to the creation of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1957. Ultimately the efforts that followed the creation of IAEA resulted in the endorsement of Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by the UN General Assembly in 1968, through the Resolution 2373 (XXII) and its enforcement in March 1970. Since then IAEA has been involved (though with certain controversies) in keeping check on any sort of efforts that are made by different countries of the world regarding proliferation of nuclear weapons. But the actions of IAEA has not been considered unbiased and are believed to serve the intentions of the powerful countries of the world that mostly support it financially. Though at present there are 189 countries that have signed the NPT, its credibility is yet to be verified considerably.

Definitely, nuclear weapons because of their capacity of mass destruction are a serious threat to mankind. No guarantee of secure existence can be established with the inclination of the countries towards the growth and development of this evil. But the arrangement for this purpose has to be made on strong and just footings.

They should never be inclined towards the objectives of few powerful states of the world; otherwise they will be doomed to failure. Furthermore, there has to be measures carried out to have proper control even on the peaceful atomic energy structures, especially after what happened in Fukushima, Japan, as the natural disasters can really turn the favors into threats. Prior to all the arrangements to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons, it is most necessary that the efforts made must be based on justice and they must treat all the nations of the world equally and must be for the betterment and survival of human beings.

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The Syrian Knot

By Joschka Fischer

For four years, a bloody war has raged in Syria. What began as a democratic uprising against Bashar al-Assad's dictatorship has developed into a cat's cradle of conflicts, partly reflecting a brutal proxy struggle among Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia for regional domination. This struggle, as the fighting in Yemen has shown, has the potential to destabilize the entire region. And now Russia, by means of its military intervention on Assad's behalf, is seeking to enhance its status as a global power vis-à-vis the West (and the United States in particular).

So the conflict in Syria is taking place on at least three levels: local, regional, and global. And, because the fighting has been permitted to fester and spread, around 250,000 people have died, according to United Nations estimates. This summer, the UN Refugee Agency put the number of refugees who had fled Syria at four million, in addition to 7.6 million internally displaced people. In the meantime, the flow of Syrian refugees to Europe has developed into one of the greatest challenges the European Union has ever faced.

The Syrian civil war has also become one of the most dangerous breeding grounds for Islamist terrorism, as the Islamic State (ISIS) attacks in Ankara, Beirut, and Paris, and the bombing of a Russian passenger plane above the Sinai Peninsula, have shown. Moreover, Turkey's downing of a Russian warplane has heightened the risk that major powers will be drawn directly into the fighting. After all, Turkey, as a NATO member, would be entitled to the Alliance's military assistance were it to be attacked. For all these reasons, the Syrian war must be brought to an end as quickly as possible. Not only is the humanitarian disaster worsening almost on a daily basis; so are the security risks emanating from the war.

Following the November 13 terrorist attacks in Paris, a new opportunity to end Syria's agony has emerged, because all the important players (except ISIS) are now willing to sit down together at the negotiating table. But, although all players have agreed to fight ISIS first and foremost, the big question remains whether they will in fact do so. The Kurds in northern Syria and Iraq are the most effective fighters against ISIS, but their own national ambitions put them at odds with Turkey. Iran and Saudi Arabia are fighting primarily against each other for regional predominance, relying on non-state actors. Russia is fighting for global status and against any form of regime change. Russia thus finds itself allied with Iran in supporting Assad's dictatorship, while Iran, in turn, is pursuing its own geopolitical interests by backing its Shia ally in Lebanon, Hezbollah, for which the Syrian hinterland is indispensable. France is more serious than ever about fighting ISIS, while Germany

and other Europeans feel obliged to assist it - and to stem the flow of refugees emanating from the region.

The US, meanwhile, is operating with handbrakes on. President Barack Obama primarily wants to avoid involving the US in another Middle East war before the end of his term. With the main global power remaining on the sidelines, however, the inevitable result has been a highly dangerous power vacuum, which Russian President Vladimir Putin is seeking to exploit.

In particular, because the US refuses to lead and Europe is too weak militarily to influence developments in Syria on its own, there is a threat of a de facto European alliance with Putin's Russia. That would be a grave error, given that any kind of co-operation with Russia wouldn't contain or end the war in Syria: In fact, there is reason to fear the opposite: Any military cooperation with Assad - which is Putin's aim and price tag - would drive a large majority of Sunni Muslims into the arms of radical Islamists.

Such a tendency is already visible in Iraq. The Shia-dominated government of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki played a decisive role in radicalizing Iraqi Sunnis and convincing them to support ISIS. It would be extremely stupid to repeat the same mistake willfully in Syria. Indeed, striking such a bargain would have nothing to do with realpolitik, because the war in Syria cannot be ended with either ISIS or Assad still in the picture.

Any Western collaboration with Russia must avoid two outcomes: the linking of Syria with Ukraine (the negotiations with Iran on limiting its nuclear program succeeded without such a linkage) and military cooperation with Assad. Instead, an attempt should be made to link a military intervention against ISIS, conducted under the auspices of the UN Security Council, with an agreement on a political transition process that moves from an armistice to a national unity government for Syria and the end of the Assad regime. And there are other big challenges looming beyond Syria: Iraq's descent into chaos, closely linked to the Syrian tragedy, threatens to turn into a new theater of conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Unless this fight for regional hegemony is contained, further proxy wars - with all the risks they entail - are inevitable. Ultimately, the decisive battle with Islamist extremism will take place within the Sunni community. Which form of Sunni Islam will prevail - the Saudi-Wahhabi version or a more modern and moderate one? This is the decisive question in the fight against ISIS and its ilk. In this context, an important factor will be how the West treats its Muslims - as welcome citizens with equal rights and obligations, or as permanent outsiders and fodder for jihadist recruiters. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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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