

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



November 19, 2017

Political Rhetoric

The mistrust between Afghan officials increased and some officials call for conducting Loya Jirga (Grand National Assembly) to mitigate the political syndrome. But Afghan Presidential Palace ruled out any truth in rumors of the holding of Loya Jirga, stating that talking about Jirgas (Assemblies) or convening unofficial Jirgas was in violation of Afghanistan's constitution.

Afghan former president Hamid Karzai repeatedly called for holding Loya Jirga. In advance of the NUG's second anniversary on September 29, 2016 – which Karzai considers its expiry date – he repeated his call for a Loya Jirga to “restore legitimacy and confidence in the NUG,” warning that failure to do so would “cause problems for our land and increase discontent.” This year, he has stepped up his networking activities and made a new push for his Loya Jirga plan.

He used the Eid-ul-Adha holiday in early September 2017 to pay visits to the homes of influential politicians. Former minister of water and energy and Herat strongman Ismail Khan told reporters on October 08, 2017, that Karzai had called him a few days before to say that he would send documents outlining his program for the way out of the current situation of the country and how to take action to solve the problems.

Karzai has also stuck to his sharp, anti-American rhetoric. While many Afghan politicians and large segments of the general public welcomed the new US military strategy presented on August 22, 2017, Karzai announced his opposition to it.

His denunciation during an interview with the BBC, even went as far as to accuse the US of “bringing up” and supporting the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). He also called for a ‘traditional Loya Jirga’ to review the new US strategy and assure Afghanistan's neighbors that its soil would not be used in favor of American and others' interest. Traditional Loya Jirgas, also called were a Karzai invention largely aimed at shoring up domestic support for actions that he wanted to take or wanted to avoid responsibility for taking, or sometimes to stir up debate.

Many Afghan and foreign observers have interpreted Karzai's statements and active networking as signs that he continues to harbor ambitions of taking up a leading political position again, despite denials, and the fact that the constitution rules out a third stint as president. For instance, on September 21, 2017, Foreign Policy wrote: “It has been three years since the former Afghan president, once a close ally of the United States who depended on American backing, left his old role. He is adamant that he has no interest in returning to the presidency. But Karzai is far from retired.”

In its September 2014 founding agreement, the National Unity Government (NUG) imposed a two-year deadline on itself to convene a Loya Jirga in order to amend the constitution and consider the creation of the post of a permanent executive prime minister. The convening of a Loya Jirga, as laid out in article 110 of the Afghan constitution, however, is linked to both an elected parliament and district councils whose members would constitute the majority of its members. Article 110 of the constitution stipulates: “...The Loya Jirga consists of: 1. Members of the National Assembly; 2. Presidents of the provincial as well as district assemblies. Ministers, Chief Justice and members of the Supreme Court as well as the attorney general shall participate in the Loya Jirga sessions without voting rights.”

Some argue that the NUG's term ended with the expiry of the 2014 agreement in 2016 and that it should have been replaced by a new arrangement, either through a Loya Jirga – called for mainly by Karzai and his supporters – or elections.

The government calls holding Loya Jirga in conflict with the current law. President's spokesman Shah Hussain Murtazawi said, “Those individuals who are rallying for a Jirga from their own standpoints, their statements have no compatibility with the prevailing laws of the country”. It should be noted that the type of Loya Jirga Karzai proposes would, however, be different from the one stated in the NUG agreement.

This agreement calls for a constitutional Loya Jirga; whereas Karzai advocates for a ‘traditional’ Loya Jirga where the president appoints all members.

Conducting consultative Loya Jirga which is mentioned in NUG agreement is not against constitution since the heads of NUG have agreed upon. But they did not hold Loya Jirga, the issue which has apparently widened the gap between officials.

Karzai is a now an ordinary Afghan citizen and his call for Loya Jirga has no sanction behind. But persisting on the issue or mobilizing the public in this regard will be an unnecessary interference to be avoided. Now it is the readers to judge whether or not holding Loya Jirga will take the country out of the current crisis.



The Hero and Villain

By Hujjatullah Zia

There are not only individuals who shed the blood of innocents but also a number of people who sacrifice their lives to save the blood from being shed. We live in the world where heroes fight against villains and vice versa. People play their role either constructively or destructively in the society. Both selfish and selfless roles are played all around the globe.

To view the human history, human beings ushered in playing the role of protagonist and antagonist. The role of hero and villain started when Cain murdered Abel. Subsequently, their children followed in their footsteps and changed either into selfish or selfless individuals. The blood of an innocent person was spilled from the very beginning of human creation and continued throughout the history. Still we live in the world where killers and victims abound.

In other words, blood evokes a deeply historical meaning in human history – especially in Islamic culture. Human history starts with blood which divides the men. When Cain slew Abel, it was the first drop of blood shed on Earth and the first ever sin committed upon Earth but Abel was chronicled in history as one of the first believers and as the first ever martyr. The Abel's tribe was filled with a strong feeling to avenge his death. This animosity was recorded in the heart of history and went on for centuries, yet continues.

According to Dr. Ali Shariati, an Iranian religious intellectual, now there are two new tribes: “the Divine tribe” – which has pledged allegiance to God – and “the Devil's tribe” – which has pledged allegiance to Satan. Still a revenge for blood continues between the two new tribes, the concept of blood has been changed, though. The Cain's tribe still owes blood to Abel's tribe and it is an obligation on Divine party to take revenge, as it was started in the beginning of human history. The heart of history is still bleeding and Cain is considered a murderer in the history. Shariati then adds that the tribal blood was changed into ideological blood.

With the divine and devil's tribes, he means that men are divided into two groups: The first group plays a constructive role in the society and acts upon the words of Lords. The second, however, plays a destructive role and seeks to spill the blood of people mercilessly. Nonetheless, I do not agree with owing blood. But he uniquely points out that tribal blood has been changed into ideological blood. In

the state of nature, tribalism held strong sway and people killed one another in light of tribal conflicts. In modern world, ideologies are the bone of contention and people murder one another due to ideological differences.

This drop of blood continued from the beginning of human history up to now. There are still two groups in war with each other and those who pledged allegiance to Cain, still kill the followers of Abel. Streams of blood have been spilled throughout the history and the cruelty of devil's tribe continues unabated. That is to say, the blood oozes as a result of the cruel practices of fundamental ideologies. On the other hand, the followers of Abel seek to save people from death.

An incident in Afghanistan depicts the selfish act of a devil's tribe and selfless act of divine tribe, to use the words of Dr. Shariati. On Thursday, an Afghan police officer hugged a suicide bomber bravely so as to save the life of civilians. The police officer, Sayed Basam Pacha, was killed as the suicide bomber detonated the explosive vest hidden under his coat. Although both the police officer and the suicide bomber were killed, the former was murdered with the sacred aim of saving people; whereas the latter was killed with the sinister objective of killing innocent individuals.

The former played the role of a hero but the latter was the very villain who sought to shed blood. In Thursday's attack, fourteen people, including Lieutenant Pacha and seven other police officers as well as six civilians, were reportedly killed; 18 others were wounded.

Afghan soldiers play the role of heroes and their names will be perpetual not only in the history of Afghanistan but also in the hearts and minds of Afghan nation. Hugging a suicide bomber to save the nation is a great heroism and bespeaks of the fact that there are many selfless individuals who fight against the wicked. They let their blood be shed to save the blood of their nation. On the contrary, those who seek to destroy the society and choose the negative role, they will be cursed by the history and nation.

To die the death of hero, we need to do our best to respect people's rights to life, liberty, and estate. In brief, we are doomed to play either the role of hero or villain. Otherwise, the third group is the viewers that do not take active part in the society and will be indifferent to all social, moral, and cultural issues, which is also negative.

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Capitalizing on Climate Unity

By Hilda Heine and Kevin Rudd

When Donald Trump was elected US president a year ago, some said the end of the Paris climate agreement was nigh. Yet, as the latest round of global climate talks in Bonn, Germany, has shown, the world's political leaders are more committed to the deal than ever. This is good news, but the fact remains that countries' commitments do not yet add up to enough to turn the tide – and our window of opportunity to act effectively on climate change is rapidly closing.

Trump's decision to withdraw the United States – the world's largest historical carbon dioxide emitter – from the Paris agreement dealt the accord a major blow. Many of America's closest allies – including both of our countries, the Marshall Islands and Australia – were deeply disappointed by the move, which was shortsighted, for both America and the world.

But it is hard not to take heart from the fresh wave of global resolve Trump's decision has unleashed, both globally and within the US itself. Almost every major US state, city, and company has now pledged to do more to ensure that their country can meet its commitments, despite the Trump administration's opposition.

The fact that climate action is now the world's biggest economic opportunity has certainly helped. According to the Trump administration's own analysis, more than twice as many Americans are now working in the solar industry than in coal, oil, and gas combined. And earlier this year, the OECD indicated that we could boost global growth by 5% per year by 2050, simply by linking the climate and growth agendas.

There is no time to waste; climate change has already arrived. This year's record-breaking drought in the Marshall Islands, apocalyptic storms in the Caribbean, and devastating floods in Bangladesh and the US demonstrate this. As the United Nations Environment Programme recently reminded us, even if every country hits its existing 2030 emissions-reduction targets, we will be unable to limit warming to below 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels – the threshold, recognized in the Paris agreement, beyond which the impact of climate change becomes far greater. Our chances even of staying within the more conservative – and dangerous – 2° Celsius limit will be slim. To ignore this reality is to gamble with the existential future of many island countries, not to mention the prosperity of the global economy.

Without a sharp rise in global ambition for emissions reductions by 2020, we will be unable to save the world's most vulnerable countries.

And if runaway climate change takes hold, no country will be immune to its effects. Unfortunately, things will get a lot worse before they get better. That is why we must step up our efforts to boost our resilience to the climate effects we won't be able to avoid, and address the associated security consequences.

In the meantime, we must urgently increase the ambition of our climate commitments. Fortunately, several upcoming events offer an opportunity to do just that. We need to seize that opportunity with both hands.

Next month, French President Emmanuel Macron will host a conference to mark the two-year anniversary of the Paris agreement. And next September, California Governor Jerry Brown will host his own summit to galvanize greater action by cities, companies, and other non-state actors. The biggest opportunity, however, will come in 2019, when UN Secretary-General António Guterres convenes world leaders in New York for the biggest climate gathering since the Paris talks.

We need to build an arc of ambition across these events that can, in the words of our friend Tony de Brum, the late Marshallese foreign minister and untiring climate warrior at the Paris conference, deliver a pathway to survival for the most vulnerable.

Some significant players are already going above and beyond their pledges. A number of others, including the Marshall Islands, are set to bring forward new targets by 2020, to augment their current targets, which reach only as far as 2025. Still others – including France, India, and New Zealand – have said informally that they are eager to do more.

The truth is that almost all countries have the capacity to do more, especially if the support is there and the opportunities are identified. The imperative now is to create the right political conditions both to motivate and facilitate action. As more countries signal their ability to increase the ambition of their commitments, still more will follow. At the same time, we must ensure that every sector, as well as every country, does its fair share. This includes, for example, international shipping, which, if it were a country, would be the world's sixth-largest emitter.

Next year's “Talanoa Dialogue” – to be convened by Fiji, which last week became the first island state to chair UN climate talks – will help countries identify exactly how they can achieve the goals set in the Paris agreement.

That dialogue, which countries should approach in good faith, must be a springboard for further action. To that end, the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report laying out pathways for keeping the temperature rise below the 1.5°C threshold will be crucial. The science remains key.

The Paris talks proved that political success is possible, if leaders are given the right platform, if civil society mobilizes behind them, and if the world acts in unison. To get the rest of the way to a sustainable future, we must apply this lesson again. The catchphrase at the Bonn conference was “further, faster, and together.” Our collective challenge is to translate a nice-sounding slogan into reality. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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