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**RAW DEAL FOR
THE TURKISH CHILD**

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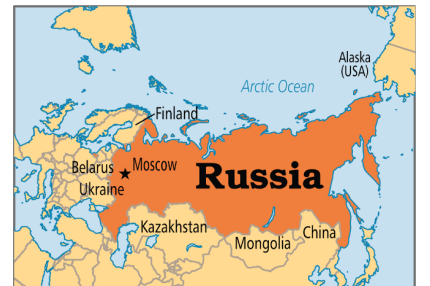
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RAW DEAL FOR THE TURKISH CHILD

Felix KAIZA

AYSE is a six-year-old Turkish child. A girl for that matter, she lives in Dar es Salaam, her birthplace in Tanzania, which is the equivalent for her country's Istanbul.

She says she is Turkish but does not know the meaning. Maybe because of the language she speaks that differentiates her from others. She knows her

grandparents live in a country she used to visit. "They are good people; their country is also good."

Her parents throw some light. These visits were made during summer when the country had everything smiling; from the people to the green landscapes.

Ayse admits having heard about President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, but does not know anything about him. How about Gulen? She knows him as “*dede*”—grandpa in Turkish. She says: “We call him ‘*Gulen Dede*’— the smiling grandpa; but he always cries! So we also call him the crying grandpa.”

Dare ask her if she could sing a national anthem; you are in for a surprise. She reaches out for a six-string guitar. She takes the crossed legs posture. Lines of Tanzania’s National Anthem smoothly roll off. That is where she was born and is being bred.

All this is taking place in the background of the 30th Anniversary of the Universal Children’s Day. She is unaware of, but fully impacted by it. Ayse does not know that thirty years ago world leaders made what has gone down in chronicles as an historic commitment to the world children as they adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Despite this being taken for an agreement on childhood – the agreement which has helped to transform children’s lives around the world – still not every child gets to enjoy a full childhood.

She does not conceptualize that too many childhoods are cut short. She only notes that she used to visit her good grandparents in their good country. But she does not know that the visits have virtually been trapped in the Erdogan-Gulen ‘crossfire’.

She does not know that being sedentary in Tanzania, she is better off than many of her fellow children currently languishing in Turkish jails with their mothers because of the severed Erdogan-Gulen ties.

The current situation is better put by UNICEF Executive Director, Henrietta Pore. In her message about this anniversary, she expresses her fears about the welfare of the world’s children arising from, among others, dictatorships and failing governments.

Among eight reasons she puts forward for her worry, she notes: “One in four of the children to be likely living and learning in conflict and disaster zones; more than 30 million of them having migrated from their places of birth (and or origin?); thousands of them will officially never exist unless action is taken; need for 21st century skills for 21st economy; protection of their digital footprint and that they might be the least trusting generation of citizens ever.”

Downloading this on the situation on the ground in Turkey, there is every reason to perceive that most of, if not all, properties of a dictatorship are there. The separation of three pillars of democracy – the Judiciary, Legislative and Government –has virtually disappeared while the fourth pillar – the media –has been more than muzzled.

As far as the children are concerned, there are reports of even babies being held in jails because their mothers sympathize with or buy Gulen ideals. Turkey is signatory to the UN Convention on Children’s Rights. Article 3 of the Convention says: **“All administrative or legislative decisions concerning children should be in the best interests of the child.”**

The presence of a mother notwithstanding, how does prison life provide for the best interests of the child? Children under these circumstances miss out on access to most basic human necessities, their specific ones like time to play put aside.



Technically, no country imprisons children. So, these children have no food rations. They have no beddings. They have to share with their mothers! Reports hint on 80% going without education, only 18% accessing kindergarten and accessing medical attention in the absence of mothers!

There have been demands for a new legislation from Civil Association in Criminal Justice Systems, **reducing the age limit for children kept in jail from six to three months**. Fine; but does this constitute what is in the best interests of the child? There have also been reports of ameliorating prison conditions to suit mother and child needs. What a contradiction in terms! Who would choose better jail conditions to freedom?

In the land of Ayer, the Children's Day was officially declared a national holiday by the Republic of Turkey in 1920 with the set date being April 23. It was officially declared nationally in 1929 –that is, 90 years ago—by the founder President of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

On a global perspective, the day found a place in modern history more than 162 years ago (1857) in Chelsea, Massachusetts, in the United States, where a pastor organized what we could term as the Children's Day today. This was more than 80 years after the Declaration of American Independence.

It emerged on the UN stage in 1947 as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to rescue the children from the effects of the World War II. It was first celebrated at the UN level in 1954 "to promote international togetherness, awareness

among children worldwide and improving children's welfare."

In 1959 the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child; and a decade later adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 1989, UNGA adopted both the Declaration and the Convention on Children's Rights.

Thirty years down the lane, the world is not there yet there, although the children's issue has been the most widely rectified human rights treaty in history. There have been many other occasions, which, without bringing the child to the fore, loses meaning. What do anniversaries the likes of fathers, mothers, parents, and grandparents mean minus the child?

Prior to the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) we had the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), six out of eight of which sought to bring awareness about the children around the globe that have experienced violence in terms of abuse, exploitation and discrimination.

UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Pore is extremely right when she asserts; **"It is up to our generation to ensure that leaders from governments, business and communities fulfill their commitment and take action for the child rights now, once and for all..."**

Otherwise, it pays to refer to Mahatma Gandhi's **"Seven blunders of the world"** worth avoiding for a delivering address to children's welfare. These are: **"Politics without principle, worship without sacrifice, science without humanity, commerce without morality, knowledge without character, wealth without work and pleasure without conscience."**

The World Children deserve more than what we have on offer on the plate for them.

Felix Kaiza

is a Tanzanian journalist



IS DEMOCRACY AN ALTERNATIVE TO ISLAM?

Yuksel CAYIROGLU

First of all, we want to reveal how a person, who tries to compare democracy and Islam by putting them on different pans on a scale; sees democracy as an alternative for Islam, and therefore believes that defending democracy would harm Islam, could have an incomplete or distorted understanding of Islam.

The provisions of Islam are not limited to faith, worship, and moral issues. On the contrary, there are very important principles and fundamentals presented by Islam; **from family life to commercial life; interpersonal relations to interstate relations; legal transactions to judicial procedures; rules of war and peace to regime.**

However, although Qur'an and Sunnah provided detailed explanations of the principles of faith and worship, halal and forbidden, or moral values, and introduced elaborated arrangements, they did not follow the same method for the provisions of treatment; in general, it has contented itself with the provision of a number of general principles and fundamentals, and left a wide area for judicial opinion in order to determine the detailed provisions.

Undoubtedly, the manner and intensity of approaching the provisions about treatment are not the same. For example, when we look at Qur'an, it is seen that a wide coverage is given to the issues related to

inheritance and family law. Similarly, in the verses and hadiths, important provisions were imposed for certain crimes and their punishments, means of proof, and proceedings. However, we cannot say the same about religious provisions concerning the regime and government. **Islam orders Muslims to have an equitable government, and in order to achieve this, it also orders the duties to be entrusted to competent people and administrative matters to be resolved in consultation.**

In fact, when we look at the legacy about fiqh (Islamic law) left to us by the Islamic jurists, we will see this legislation philosophy that we try to summarize. Because fiqh books first and foremost focused on worships, then family law, agreements, commercial relations, penalties, judiciary issues and gave wide coverage to these, but did not broach the basic political issues such as the gain, use, and limitation of power, and the issues related to the organization and governing of the state, which is reviewed under the name of Constitutional Law today, have not been the subject of fiqh books.

Certainly, studies focusing on this field exist. Muslim scholars reviewed political issues for different purposes and produced important works on politics. For example, many scholars added the “Imamate” section to the end of their books, Islamic scribes wrote “al-ahkam as-sultaniyyah” (provisions about governing), *siyasat al-shariyya* (authority about governing), and *siyasatnama* (political treatise), and Islamic philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina focused on different political theories.

When we take a closer look at these studies, we can say the following: *The main purpose of imamite articles in Kalam books is to provide an answer to the method of “nas” (the words of Quran and Prophet (PBUH)) and “appointment” claimed by the Shia regarding the way the head of state takes office. The ulama emphasized whether the appointment of the head of state is obligatory or not, the way the head of state takes office, and the characteristics of the head of state.*

The purpose of writing the political treatise is to make a general evaluation of the political system they live in, identify the causes of retrogression and corruption, and to advise the rulers on how to provide a fair and moral government. The writers of political treatise also focused on the attitude of the rulers, they tried to correct their missing and failing aspects, make the rulers forbear oppression, and made an effort for the establishment of a fair system. It is more appropriate to see these works as moral works that try to improve existing political practices rather than legal texts that establish binding provisions. And the works of Islamic philosophers under the influence of ancient Greek philosophy are very theoretical texts. Rather than identifying the religious provisions about ruling in terms of the nature of science they are engaged in, they have focused on theoretical and rationally different political theories and ruminated about the most ideal regime.

Among the works written in this field, the most important works dealing with different issues related to the regime and constitutional law are “al-ahkam as-sultaniyyah” (provisions about governing). However, although some provisions regarding the regime were focused on, most of these works constitute matters such as financial law, judicial organization, proceedings, punishments, and land law. And the provisions on constitutional and administrative law are very limited. These are generally based on the practices of the period of the four caliphs, rather than the *nas*. It is possible to see the impact of the social and political life of that period over the judicial opinion. Therefore, it is not correct to see all the relevant provisions as if they are strictly binding regulations at all times.

It should not be understood from our statements that we think these works are insignificant and unnecessary. On the contrary, they are full of very important ideas, advice, knowledge, and experience about statecraft and political opinion. The main reason we have made the explanations above is that the Quran and Sunnah did not introduce detailed regulations that are binding to state administration at all times. There is neither a

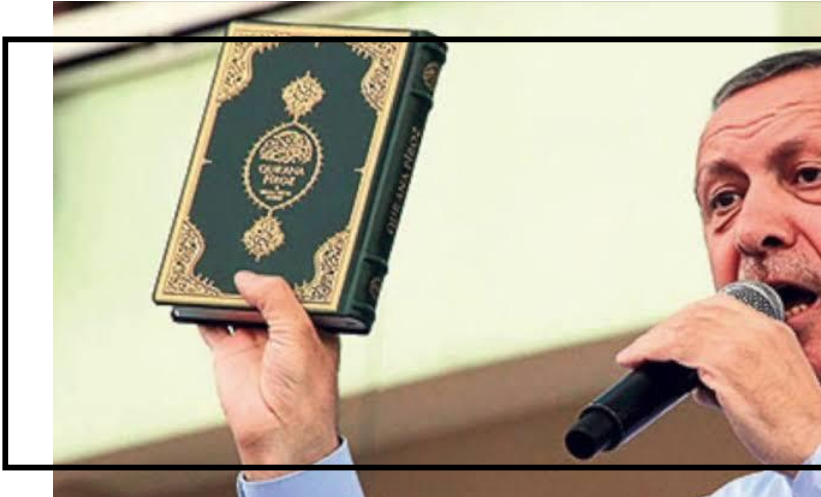
specific form of state nor a form of government presented by Islam. The fact that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not leave anyone to take charge of governing after him and that each of the four caliphs took the office of the caliphate in a separate manner can be accepted as evidence for this detail. Similarly, in the letters He (PBUH) sent to invite the kings to Islam, he assured them that they would remain on their throne and continue ruling if they accepted Islam.

The points expressed here are in harmony with the purpose of human existence and the fundamental objectives of religions. In the most basic sense, the main objective of human creation is to be able to worship Allah (SWT) as a servant properly and to treat people with compassion by freeing from the domination of desires and aspirations. Allah (SWT) showed the way to true servitude and good morality through the books and prophets He (SWT) sent. The following verse: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (Surah Adh-Dhariyat 51:56), and the following hadith: "I was sent to complete good morals" (Muvatta, Husnu'l-huluk, 1) refer to this.

Therefore, the aim of Islam is to build a moral and clean society composed of individuals who have gained a second nature with Islam rather than bringing a certain state system from above. The form of the established ruling mechanism was transferred to

individuals who reached a certain maturity through Islamic education. They are obliged to establish the fairest and the most appropriate system for social affairs by means of consultation. The fact that Islam is a universal religion that appeals to all times and places and a human being sent to earth as a caliph necessitate this.

Unfortunately, Islamic discourse has been over-politicized although the Quran and the Sunnah do not emphasize much on the regime and the ulama confined their scientific efforts to issues related to individuals and society rather than politics. In particular, political Islamists and some radical groups emerging in the name of Islam have reduced the universal and encircling message of Islam to a regime project. In fact, according to some imaginary fictions they created in their minds and their aim to conquer the state, it can be said that they abuse religion and turn it into an ideology in order to rule the people.



If we look at the bitter experiences and heavy shocks and traumas the Islamic world has experienced in the last two or three centuries, it will be seen that the requests and demands of political Islamists about politics and state are on good grounds. But here's the issue that concerns us; the emergence of the demand for an "Islamic state", the evaluation of religious issues through the spectacle of politics, acting as if there is a consistent political theory developed by Islam pose a great obstacle in terms of understanding Islam correctly and evaluating the modern-day political regimes with regards to Islam.

Political attitudes such as putting Islam as an alternative to democracy, deeming democracy contrary to Islam, claiming that an Islamic regime is superior to democracy are the results of these incomplete or incorrect evaluations about Islam. It is not possible to get somewhere by making comparisons and evaluations by putting Islam on one side and democracy on the other side. Because there is no alternative form of government put forward by Islam against democracy. Those who oppose democracy in the name of Islam cannot propose a convincing alternative form of government. It is not possible to reach a conclusion with the following idea: "Let's destroy the existing one, then we can decide what to do". This type of approach will only lead to anarchy and chaos. Finally, it should be noted that the method of comparing

Islam, which is a divine religion based on revelation, civilization, and culture, with democracy which is a political regime is not correct. Because, since comparing two completely different entities (existence) with each other is wrong, there will not be any accurate results. It should not be forgotten that such a comparison would mean the identification of religion with pure power, and thus would lead to the misunderstanding of religion. Because the provisions about politics constitute a very small part of religion. Therefore, the idea of "either Islam or democracy" is not correct. It's quite possible for both of them to coexist and reconcile.

The Relationship Between Islam and Democracy in the Grip of Ideals and Realities

One important mistake made by the people who oppose democracy is the way they break Islam's connection from the actual reality and portray it as an utopia that is to be reached and stands outside the realities. Their discourses and objectives are based on highly idealized imaginary Islamic fictions. However, the ideas brought forward in the name of Islam without understanding the spirit of the time and ignoring the social conditions will bring more negative results than positive. The following words of our Prophet (PBUH) is a very good example about taking the realities into consideration: **"Were your people not close to the Pre-Islamic period of ignorance, I would have demolished**

the Ka'ba and would have rebuilt it on its original foundations laid by Abraham (for Quraish had curtailed its building), and I would have built a back door (too).” (Sahih al-Bukhari Volume 2, Book 26, Number 655)

Nowadays, most of the discussions about the relationship between democracy and Islam are quite theoretical. Therefore, although very exquisite analyzes and seminal criticisms are made, many of these are not applicable ideas in terms of social and political conditions. Unfortunately, the idealization of the Asr-i Saadet (Golden Age) and the period ‘Four Caliphs’ disconnected from history and facts does not contribute to the improvement of existing political structures. Because it is impossible to establish social and political structures with the theories put forward in a place where social acceptances, customs and concepts, and culture and civilization are ignored.

Many of them present an “Islamic form of regime” based on first-period practices and the nas, and they try to explain its superiority over democracy. But the same people cannot make satisfactory explanations about how this form of government, where political participation is essential, was replaced by the heirdom system and totalitarianism after the four caliphs. Moreover, they do not have satisfactory explanations and remedies about the ongoing regimes of autocracy, violation of rights, restrictions, oppression and persecution in the Islamic world. It is easy to make some theoretical inferences by looking at the nas. The difficult part is to adopt the obtained provisions to the social realities they live in or to provide an action plan for the Muslims in order for them to follow.

Unfortunately, as we have been getting closer to the present day, the bond between religion and life has gradually weakened and fiqh has been pushed out of life. Islamic identity was severely wounded, sensitivities were eroded, and historical consciousness was lynched. The Islamic world of today, which has lost its direction and trajectory, is experiencing a creepy crisis of civilization and a period of dark interregnum. The Muslim imagination, which has moved away from its

epistemology, values, and historical roots, has been seriously injured. Many Muslims lost their way in the face of the materialist, positivist, and rationalist philosophy of the West. The remaining Muslims today are experiencing serious anxiety in education, economy, politics etc.

Therefore, those who will work on the relationship between Islam and democracy should raise their heads from the pages of the books and at least take a look at the general conditions of Muslims and the general course of the world. Today, the results of a comparison of human rights, fundamental rights and freedoms, education level, welfare, development etc between the Western countries and Islamic countries are quite obvious. Unfortunately, Islamic countries dominated by totalitarian regimes are entirely full of human rights violations. The level of education is very low. Unemployment, poverty, and even hunger are among the main problems. Disputes, conflicts, civil wars, and power struggles persist. The value of a human being is not known. The values such as love, tolerance, respect to the others, and culture of living together, which also constitutes the essence of Islam, has been replaced by rudeness, harshness, and exclusion. Unfortunately, there is not much that Muslims produce and add value to the world. As they are not interested in the common problems of the world and humanity, their solutions to global issues are very limited.

In Islamic geography, individuals can easily be sacrificed for the divine purposes of the state. Although the main duty of the state rulers is to protect the fundamental rights of the people such as life, property, religion, and honor, the rulers themselves often become the biggest threat. In such countries, state power makes itself felt in all areas of life so much that there is almost no space for private and civic life. It becomes impossible to remove a dictator who seized power. Even if the person who took over the power is not a dictator at first, the structure of the political system, the perceptions and opinions of the public about the state and the rulers are enough to make him a dictator in a very short time.

The picture in Western countries, which are governed by democracy, is quite different. The West provided a comfortable and prosperous life to its people thanks to democracy and democratic values. Moral values such as respect, courtesy, and caring for people has already become a culture. For this reason, Western people enjoy freedom under the wings of democracy. The democratic environment where different ideas are respected and the general atmosphere where the security of life and property is assured have revived the spirit of enterprise and developed intelligence and capabilities. This brought about scientific and technological developments, production and industrialization. Therefore, the development in social and political life was followed by economic development. In the same way, Western states have provided their citizens with important opportunities to live humanely thanks to the solid system they have established in fields such as politics, law, and education.

Therefore, such real facts must be taken into consideration when making comments on the subject. Western states owe much of their development and progress to democracy and freedom. The main responsibility for the lagging of the Islamic geography belongs to the tyrannical and despotic rulers who drops on society and politics like a nightmare.

Discourses and actions such as “We will bring a better Islamic regime than democracy” will only manage to change the color and pattern of the existing autocracy in a geography where Islamic values, culture, and people are corrupted and all different elements try to live together. The autocracy applied for the sake of nationalism according to some, irreligiousness according to others, and the dominance of their ideology according to some others will continue to exist under the cover of religion. The experience of Islamic countries and political Islamists in recent years is the greatest witness to this fact.

For this reason, Muslims should stop engaging in a number of theories, utopias that cannot be realized and are not even accepted by the majority of Muslims;

instead, they should understand that the only way out for them is more freedom, more human rights, and more democracy.

If they realize this, it will not be difficult to interpret democracy in accordance with Islam and Muslim societies. As a matter of fact, Islamic jurists have seen even the heirdom system as legitimate under difficult conditions. Some jurists even expressed that obedience is mandatory to the tyrannical rulers who seized power through oppression. Of course, these are not the ideal provisions envisaged by Quran and Sunnah; rather, they are imperative provisions presented to prevent further loss of life and property at a push. It is a fact that the theory of anything cannot be carried into practice. Because that's where the human element comes in. And where there are human beings, the errors and defects always exist.

Last but not least, in today's world where democracy is as important and as indisputable as possible, it is absolutely necessary to consider how opposing it can be perceived in terms of non-Muslim societies and states, and how such an attitude will affect the viewpoints about Islam. Nowadays, under whatever name and for whatever reason, opposing democracy has become synonymous with autocracy and totalitarianism. Therefore, there is no doubt that such an attitude would demonstrate Islam as a repressive and coercive religion.

In his book “Muhakemat”, Bediuzzaman draws attention to an important truth: “Whoever denies and rejects a truth that is fixed with definite evidence such as the roundness of the world for the sake of protecting the religion, he commits a great felony and treason to the religion.” (p. 41). Even if the roundness of the world is not based on certain evidence, there is widespread belief and unshakable trust in the world of humanity regarding the correctness of democracy. Democracy is now seen as an ideal to be achieved, such as justice, morality, and honesty. A person who tries to stand against it in the name of religion will harm the religion and will defile its image. Because his attitude will make Islam look like a pro-dictatorial religion.

For this reason, it is essential for Muslims, who have been struggling under the reign of dictators for centuries and writhing under the oppression of tyrannical regimes, to put aside fighting with democracy and being hostile against it in order to see their real enemies, and to use their power and energy in the direction of destroying autocracy.

To be continued...

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WORLD PEACE WEAPON

FOR UNGA

Felix KAIZA

It's September. Global media catch the 'UNGA' fever, so to say. In my region on the world planet, where the Kiswahili language has just been adopted as one of the official languages in the 16-member countries Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), this stands chances of giving rise to a wide range of scenarios.

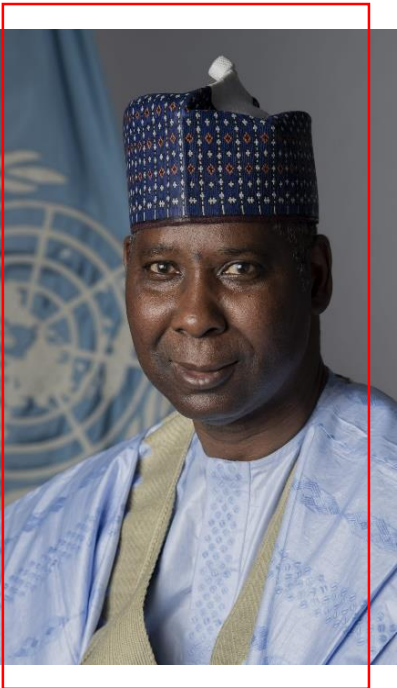
Scenario One: In the circles of combating the notorious world problem of narcotics, human trafficking, money laundering and organized crime, 'UNGA' is the nickname specific for all forms of drug abuse.

Scenario Two: Enthusiasts of agriculture, climate change, food security, nutrition, and refugee problem get the feeling of 'UNGA' challenges. The word simply means flour; but bears explicit messages of the entire inexhaustible multi-link value chain.

Scenario Three: To Heads of State and Government and all those in the orbit of the 193 member countries of the United Nations, it's the 'UNGA' season standing for the United Nations General Assembly in New York. This time round, it is the 74th in the series.

A whole litany of scenarios can be written about 'UNGA'. But it suffices to stop here and dig into the affairs of Scenario Three. The unquoted UNGA is one of the six main organs of the UN, where several world issues on the table embracing peace and security, development, international law and the like, are thrown to the global floor for discussion.

News from New York headquarters reveals Africa sticking its neck out. For this year's session, Ghana is occupying the first seat in the Hall. The presidency goes to Nigeria with Permanent Ambassador



Tijjani Muhammad-Bande prioritizing peace and security, poverty eradication, zero hunger, quality education, climate change and inclusion of all.

What else could one expect from the Nigerian scholar-cum-diplomat in the full home experience of the *Boko Haram*? This is representative of the world crisis today. Prof. Muhammad-Bande thus promises full

“collaboration...to ensure greater attention is paid to prevention rather than reaction to full blown conflict. I will also advocate for effective early detection and early warning systems, as well as mediation, negotiation and peaceful settlement of ongoing conflicts.”

The true picture of the world is one of proliferation of political and armed conflicts. In this aspect, the Middle East, in all its groupings, is the hot bed. Syria is the typical example. For one thing, Syria at one point in history stood for a home of inter-religious harmony.

Today, more than three million people have been displaced in an emerging civil conflict that has drawn in foreign armed interests into the picture. The United States and Russia are there displaying and selling sophisticated weaponry on the detriment of the lives of common people. Iraq has not been any different.

Consider what is taking place now in post-Muammar Gaddafi Libya. Very latest media reports talk of the eastern-based army of Libya announcing the killing of more than 90 members of UN-backed government forces in battles and airstrikes **This vicious war, which has been going on for about five months, has already claimed thousands of lives and displaced almost 120,000 civilians.**

The Middle East countries aside, the rest of the world is littered with indiscriminate political crises and armed conflicts, which put on a wide range of masks. How can the world forget the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis? In the very recent past, the world has come face to face with grim extremist incidents in Christchurch, Colombo and Oslo.

Government forces in Myanmar have had to mount a crackdown on the Rohingya community. Armed militant groups have committed abuses on human rights in the Central African Republic. Central to all these incidents and many others abound in the world is the rise in racism, discrimination, intolerance – sometimes regardless of religious or denominational touches.

The question here is: Why is all this happening in the wake of the fact that there is no religion which advocates hatred? Why have world communities come to the stage of taking hatred and distrust as mutual aspects of the 21st century human dwellers? How come that some of the perpetrators of anti-humanity actions fall back on religious beliefs? What has gone wrong? Where is the cure?

Today we humans have no time for one another. Followers of the Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – no longer live their faith. Judaism, *Leviticus* says categorically that **“when an alien lives with you in your land, do not ill-treat him (He) must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”**

Christianity calls for (or rather orders) love. The Good Samaritan parable mentioned in the *St. Luke Gospel* sends the message of going out to helping strangers even if this contradicts traditional norms.

In Islam, the *Quran* teaches that all people were created by God. In his last sermon, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said **“all mankind is descended from Adam and Eve, an Arab is not better than a non-Arab and a non-Arab is not better than an Arab; a white person is not better than a black person, nor a black person better than a white person except by piety and good actions...”**

In every way, Muslims are called upon to stand up and challenge racism and intolerance. If Christians followed the raised values, there would be no practices of racism, intolerance and violence against other people. Judaism targets at seeing to it that violence and intolerance are reduced.

Even in Hinduism, the *Vedas* declare: ***“No one is superior or inferior. All are brothers and all should strive for the interest of all and progress collectively.”***

If, despite all this, racism, racial discrimination, intolerance and fear of the other still dominate the human relationships pertaining to the contemporary world, the answer lies in going back to religion. This is the missing link.

There is need for inter-faith linkups. Dialogue between people of different religious backgrounds in a must. To borrow from the language of environmentalists, this is the way to establish a sustainable change. Lasting change is not enough.

It is here that the world could also borrow from the words of Pope Francis during this visit to Bosnia in 2015. The Catholic Pontiff said: **“We need to communicate with each other; to discover the gifts of each person, to promote that which unites us, and to regard our differences as an opportunity to grow in mutual respect.”**

This is the pro-world peace magic worth sending to the 74th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) currently going on in New York rather than “F” and “S” ground-to-air ballistic and anti-ballistic missile antes. The world cannot survive but die on these options. The most effective weapon for peace on earth is dialogue and return to religious teachings.

Felix Kaiza

is a Tanzanian journalist with more than 50 years of experience currently working as an independent media consultant. Learned in agriculture, journalism, political science and international relations, his main fields of consultancy, besides the media, are good governance, nature conservation, tourism and investment.



MOSCOW'S REACTION TO ANKARA SUMMIT

Arif ASALIOGLU

President Tayyip Erdogan, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani met in Ankara as guarantor states' leaders on behalf of Syria. The important points of the main agenda of the three leaders, who had met most recently on 14 February in Sochi, Russia, were to provide a permanent ceasefire in Idlib and to allow people to return to their homes; the plan for a safe zone between the United States and Turkey in the east of the Euphrates; developments in Manbij and Tall Rifat; works on Constitutional Committee; protecting the integrity of Syria during the political transition process. The last agenda is important since both Russia and Iran have been attaching importance to this topic since the beginning of the Astana talks.

It is possible to state that the trilateral summit, which had been started between the leaders of Russia, Turkey, and Iran as the Astana meetings, generate significant results in terms of strengthening security and stability in the Middle East. Especially Moscow's fine diplomacy contributed to the normalization of the situation in Syria. Astana summits strengthened economic and political ties between the three countries. Additionally, it is also necessary to add that the military relations between Turkey and Russia have consolidated too.

Dialogue Urged with Damascus Regime

Russia, which has not changed its stance about Syria's territorial integrity, transition to the constitutional process, and the neutralization of the terrorist groups since the Syrian crisis began, urged Turkey and Iran both to provide humanitarian aid and political support for the realization and activation of the establishment of the Constitutional Committee. Russia also emphasized on dialogue with the Damascus regime for a stabilized Syria. Same emphasis was also voiced by Rouhani, who stated **"free and independent Syria", "Syrian people must decide their own future themselves"**.

The Russian media as a whole evaluated the Ankara summit as successful for Moscow. Roman Shimaev wrote that the US presence in Syria poses a threat in his analysis on Russian Today. Ankara has been negotiating with visiting US military and diplomatic officials since July in order to establish a safe zone in the east of the Euphrates. As a result of the negotiations between the US and Turkish authorities, it had been decided to establish a Joint Operation Centre in Sanliurfa. Then, joint air and land patrols had been carried out on the Syrian side of the border. Moscow adumbrated their discomfort about these joint steps taken between the US and Turkey, and it seems to be backing away from the idea of the establishment of a safe zone in the east of Euphrates. That is why the emphasises on Syria's territorial integrity, independence, and the will of the people are clearly expressed. Rouhani, who came to Ankara on 15 September for the summit, stated, "The illegal presence of the United States and other forces in the east of Euphrates prevented this region of Syria from embracing peace."

Different Approaches About Idlib

Stanislav Tarasov, who evaluated the summit in his column at Regnum News Agency, focused on Idlib, one of the most important agenda items today. He wrote about Hayat Tahrir al-Sham's increasing attacks in the region recently by stating that the Syrian army has been fighting against this Al-Qaeda-linked group and its affiliates in Idlib on the border of Turkey. He also thinks that this is a result of Turkey breaking its promise which was given about a year ago. Ankara had to abide by the decision of Moscow and Tehran. Backed by Russia and Iran, Syrian State forces are trying to re-take the control of Idlib, which is the last region in the hands of dissidents. The areas, which were controlled by the dissidents two years ago, were declared a "de-conflict zone". Most of the dissidents, including the radical groups in these regions, immigrated to Idlib under the cease-fire agreements reached at the end. Russia, Iran, and Turkey established observation points in this region.

On the other hand, **Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) was excluded from the cease-fire conditions because it was accepted as a "terrorist organization" by all three countries.** The Damascus regime, which declared war against the HTS, has recently increased its attacks towards Idlib and its surrounding areas thanks to the support of Russia and Iran.

Putin Made It Clear

It is noticeable that Russian President Putin's speech reveals the separation between Turkey and the other partners of the summit.

Putin said, "We can reach peace and stability in Syria through political means", "We are the three countries supporting the territorial integrity of Syria", "We will support the Syrian army with limited operations in order to eliminate terrorism. Our agreement does not involve terrorist organizations", and once again declared that they support the Damascus regime. And both Putin and Rouhani have shown co-operation with Assad as a solution.

Putin also reacted clearly to the American presence there: "US forces are illegally present in Syria. We believe that Mr. Trump will perform his decision to withdraw."

"All states in the region, including Turkey, have the right to protect its own security."

"We are all in favour of the territorial integrity of Syria. All foreign elements must withdraw from Syria."

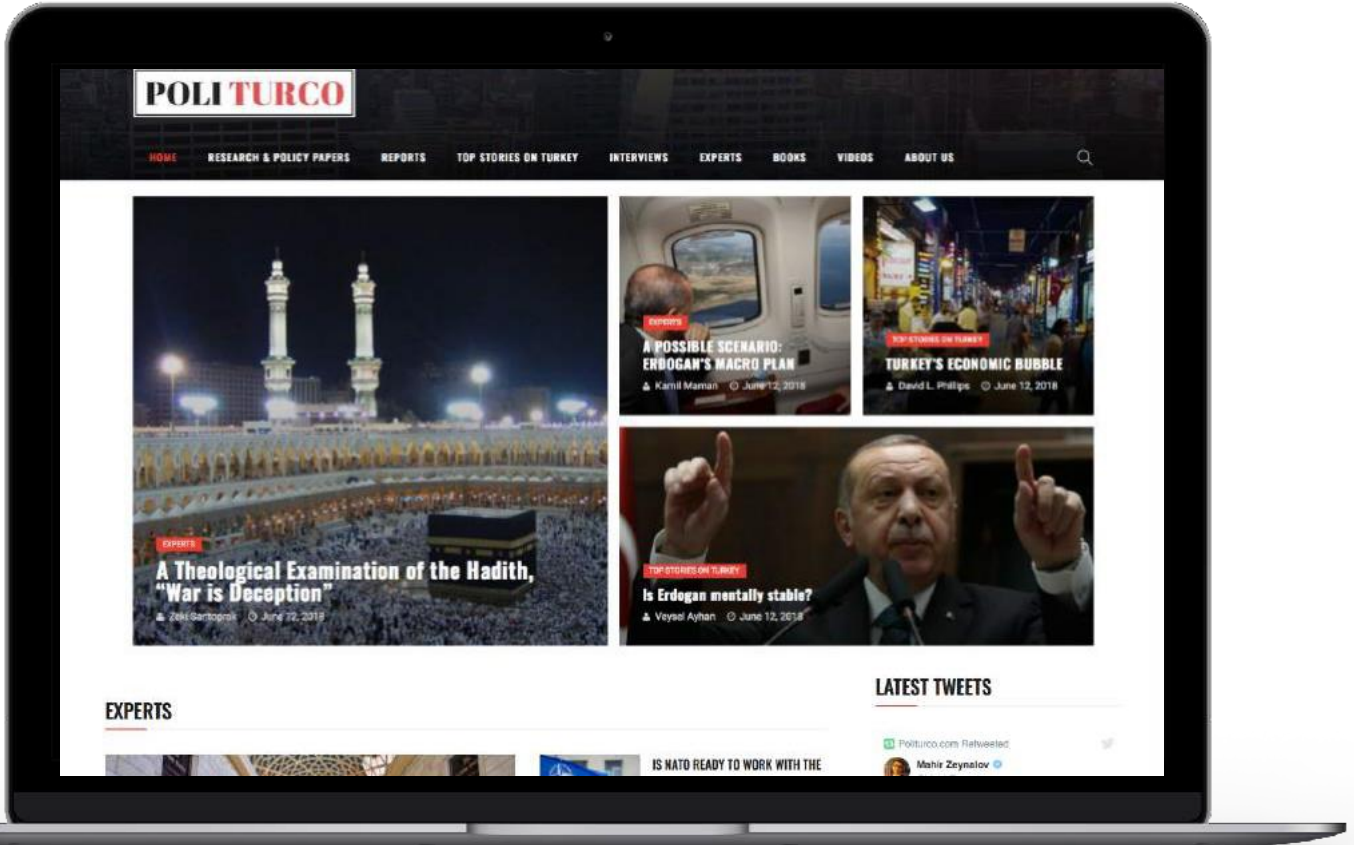
These approaches were also reflected in the jointly announced final declaration.

Adana Agreement on the Table Again

The trilateral summit in Ankara did not produce results that would change the basic strategy envisaged by Russia in Syria in many respects. In other words, the expectations of the Turkish side was not actualized. Iran and Russia reminded Ankara more strictly of the steps that will be taken within the framework of the Adana Agreement as an option. In this way, narrowing down the areas controlled by Turkey and the cooperation between Damascus and Ankara were highlighted. Together with the establishment of the Constitutional Committee, the objective will be to create appropriate conditions in order to send the Syrians refugees both in Turkey and other regions back to their countries.

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