

## book review

# Human Rights and Anarchy in the Hands of Nation-States: Ideology, Religion, Democracy & Nationality Issues

By Dr. Md. Maimul Ahsan Khan

The following Review-article has been written on the central theme of the three books of renowned author Robert Kaplan, who is very famous for his Balkan Ghosts

1. Kaplan, Robert D. *The Ends of the Earth: From Togo to Turkmenistan, from Iran to Cambodia, a Journey to the Frontiers of Anarchy*. Vintage Books, 1997. pp.476;

2. Kaplan, Robert D. *The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 20th Century*. Random House, 1996.

3. Kaplan, Robert D. *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War*. Random House, 2000. pp.208

THE central theme of these three books is the identity crisis of modern Nation-states and nationalities. These books are compilation of author's essays published in different reputed journals during the 1990-s. Most of the essays focus on the reality of post-Cold War period. Describing major challenges faced by many nations and their states the author present a picture of pre-set-day world politics and its consequence on the entire humanity. Through these books the author takes his readers into a long journey from Freetown of Sierra Leone to Far East. The route has been taken through the Nile Delta, Central Asia and South Asia including Bengal. The author finds that the Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sub-Continent of Asia is in fact the most vulnerable regions of the World.

"The Indian sub-continent, like sub-Saharan Africa, constitutes its own environmental, climatic, and bacteriological field" (Book 1, p. 343).

But those human tragedies could not draw the proper attention of big players of international politics. Though after the test of nuclear blast by both India and Pakistan now again the Sub-continent drew some attention of big powers, yet wellbeing of the masses were not put in perspective. It appears that the entire pre-set-day international order has been driven by arms race and/or superficial political agenda. According to the author real humane concern in international politics has already been lost. Only because of some apparent political reasons the Balkan and Middle Eastern regions have been getting more prominence in the agenda of world politics.

Many readers may find it difficult to agree with the author that the nationality policies of some important countries such as Russia or Turkey is more serious problem than the Arab-Israeli conflicts. Some readers may feel that maybe the author is somehow correct in the case of Serbian aggression against Bosnian and Kosovo-Albanian Muslims or Russian aggression against the Chechen Muslims. But for the author the source of real tension is not the religious conflicts, which he regards as the symptoms of disease, not the cause of the disease.

For an important country like Turkey, which in fact had its own empire, now cannot solve even some basic problems of its own. The author thinks that even the military defeats

Author time and again points his finger to the faulty arrangement of modern nation-states, which have been failing to address major issues of humanity, environment, and mankind. The author finds that some very important countries such as Brazil, Nigeria, India, and Turkey have been becoming ungovernable, while many territorial boundaries of African and Asian states are either meaningless or harmful for the general masses. The present-day mankind is under tremendous environmental and demographic stress not because of scarcity of resources; it is the uneven distribution of powers and wealth among the different nationalities and groups both at national and international levels made the world-politics and economy anarchic.

of the Turks against the Russian caused less harm to the Turkish people than the Turkish government's own wrong policies towards Kurdish Muslims. The author gives appropriate emphasis on consequence of the Turk-Kurd conflicts over last few decades. What is the point of destroying a powerful Muslim people like Kurds by the Turkish governments, who also utterly failed to address of the real problems of Turkish Muslims. The author questioned about the nationality conflicts between Turks, Arabs and even Persians and does not see any sense of those conflicts for the people of the Muslim world. In fact one would say that author gives too much emphasis on the Muslim countries and people while he has been explaining the common issues of the entire mankind.

Author time and again points his finger to the faulty arrangement of modern nation-states, which have been failing to address major issues of humanity, environment, and mankind. The author finds that some very important countries such as Brazil, Nigeria, India, and Turkey, have been becoming ungovernable, while many territorial boundaries of African and Asian states are either meaningless or harmful for the general masses. The present-day mankind is under tremendous environmental and demographic stress not because of scarcity of resources; it is the uneven distribution of powers and wealth among the different nationalities and groups both at national and international levels made the world-politics and economy anarchic.

Since the Industrial Revolution specialization in particular area of knowledge and skill has received a far greater importance than ever before. Deep penetration in all spheres of technical knowledge and know-how was necessary for the quick advancement of all branches of science and technology. Learning process has been thoroughly compartmentalized, and specialization in a very narrowed area of science occupies a very important pre-condition for new discoveries. As a result number of discoveries and inventions has increased dramatically. Technological know-how has become the main driving force of human societies, states, financial institutions, industries, agriculture, and educational institutions.

**Miracles brought by the scientific and technological advancement over shadowed the importance of knowledge in human sciences. Natural sciences have started to dominate all spheres of human life and society. As if human being is so committed to**

**natural sciences that he forgot of himself. As a result development and enrichment of human qualities suffered tremendously. Unguarded implementation of technological discoveries brought immense destruction to environment and societal affairs of human beings. Atheistic, anti-religious, non-spiritual, and merely materialist approaches towards life made human being more reckless than ever before. Indiscriminate and comprehensive exploitation of a vast majority of human race by a tiny group of people made the gap between rich and poor intolerable at state, regional and international levels. In this backdrop emergence of communist states and powers was almost inevitable as imminent was their collapse.**

During the Cold War era it was felt everywhere that the moral fabric of all states and societies had been weakened substantially. The Western leaders blamed the communist countries for the degradation of human dignity and invited all religious forces and countries to stand for democracy and human rights against the Marxist forces and Soviet communism. A vast majority of the Muslim people and leaders sided with the Western countries in their ideological battles against the communist regimes.

The post-Cold War era has already shattered almost all the pious dreams and noble ideas of Welfare State and New Global Economic Order. International drug and arms cartels, unprovoked crimes and criminal anarchy sponsored by the governments and so-called private armies, and scarcity of resources to face the problems of environmental degradation, hunger and disease are now common phenomenon all over the world.

Now a question has been frequently asked whether the post-Cold War Era really had/had any pious dreams for the causes of Human Rights, Rule of Law, Democracy and so forth. The same question can be put to the process of European colonization of the world, De-colonization process, Industrial Revolution and so forth. The so-called Third world countries have emerged as a result of de-colonization process of the world and they now constitute the bulk of Nation-states, many of those now either geo-politically not at all viable as economic entity or almost completely ungovernable because of corrupted party-politics and ethnic conflicts.

"The prevailing situation in the Muslim world in fact reveals the world-politics in a better way for everybody living on our planet now. If we look at the fifty-five Muslim Nation-states then we can see how seriously

they have been becoming explosive in recent years. The major source of tensions in the Muslim world mistakenly regarded as the religious issues. The colonial legacy compounded with the wrong nationality policies of the Muslim nation-states made the situation horrible. The Muslim governments have been fighting fiercely over the territorial boundaries drowned by the colonial rulers.

The modern Turkey is the first typical Muslim Nation-state. It has a very 'good credential' for fighting against all kinds of religiosity and Marxist forces. Thus the Western countries have always supported the Turkish governments, which cannot boost for any real democratic success in the country. The then united Pakistan (1947-71) was the worst example of failure of a Muslim nation-state; and pre-set-day Pakistan is no good example either. Thus for the author the idea of Nation-state is very dubious in its aims and objectives. And for the Muslims the essence of modern statehood has been becoming confused as the ideas of Islam.

The author intended to discover the truth in the real dynamic of political affairs of the Muslim world and unfortunately he also got confused by the dichotomy of modern Muslim nations.

"One Sufi group, the Bektashis, supported Atatürk's secular nationalist movement, thought some Sufi orders have worked against Atatürk's secularizing trend. Turgut Ozal, Turkey's late president and prime Minister, was a devout Sufi. Ozal's deep religious commitment, combined with his intense dislike of Muslim dictators such as Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and Iraq's Saddam Hussain, would have been warned Rumi's heart. Turkey's political future will be, influenced by urbanization, the pressures brought upon individual Turks as they fight to maintain their traditions in big cities, particularly in the gecekondu." (Book 1, p.145)

It is really difficult to ascertain who are democrat and dictator among

Muslim leaders, especially if they are alive. Among the dead Muslim leaders K. Atatürk got a name of progressive secular-democratic leader, who is widely praised in the Western and even in some Muslim literature. But many critics find only a very thin line between him and many contemporary Muslim despotic leaders. Thus confusion over the credentials of the Muslim leaders is very common both in the writings of Muslim and non-Muslim leaders. Robert Kaplan is no exception to this rule.

Why is it so important to examine the role of Muslim leaders in the na-

tion-building efforts of their countries? The basic concepts of modern Nation-state have been taken by many Muslims as an anti-thesis of Khilafah, a central political power for all Muslim nations. As a result Muslims in general reacted against the establishment of a sovereign-state on the basis of national or ethnic identities. But problems around the issues of national identities and their reflections in the behaviors of state authorities have been mounting since the fall of Abbasid Khalifat in 1258. With the rise of Ottoman Muslim governments in fourteen century the Saffabids in Iran took the national issues more serious to undermine the Istanbul-based Muslim governments. To boost the Iranian challenge against the Ottomans the Saffabids of Iran invited the Shiite Ulema from around the world to replace Hanafi School of Fikh (law) in fifteen century C.E. and subsequently made the Jafari Fikh the official legal source of Iran. Conflicts between the Turks and the Arabs had been surfacing with a greater speed during the entire eighteen century C.E. But the mainstream Muslim politicians and Jurists for a long time ignored this vital issues of modern statehood and claimed that the Muslim nations cannot/should not go for any nation-state. In this backdrop K. Atatürk declared himself as the founder of modern nationalist state of Turkey.

Mentioning the author's conversation with many present-day Turkish Muslim he cited the following:

"Ozal softened the secular edge of Kemalism so that religious Turks now feel included in the system. This new freedom allows Turks to unite the present and future with the old cultures of the past, Seljuk and Ottoman. Islam is a serious component in this process." (cited in Book 1, p.146)

Why Kemalism got a so bad name as secular ideology in the entire Muslim world? Did Kemalism bring any good to the ordinary people of Turkey? Repressive policies pursued by the Kemalism in Turkey subsequently adopted by many Muslim secular leaders in the different Muslim countries. G.A. Nasser of Egypt, M. Jinnah of the united Pakistan, J.Ali Bhutto of Pakistan, Shocorno and Shuhatto of Indonesia, and S. Mujib of Bangladesh are only few names of typical Muslim leaders of contemporary Muslim world. They many have many differences between them, but as secular leaders they all adopted tyrannical and extreme suppressive policies against their own people. To keep their face shining they adopted an eye-wash democratic policy to generate

support from foreign countries. Many of them succeeded in that venture of gaining foreign support for their governments, majority of which utterly failed to any benefits of modern statehood to their own people. As a result no system of governance has developed as yet in any Muslim country of the world; most of the Muslim countries still have been governed by the whims of the leaders in power.

In any developed state one single leader or politician cannot drag the entire country from one tragedy to another. Only the post-Cold war Russian phenomenon of political and military leadership can explain the real dynamics of the Muslim political affairs of last one hundred years.

For the Muslim nations now it has been clear that they had been fighting for politically independent states, but

their leaders did not have any dreams for the Muslim states or people other than their own vested interests. The Muslim leaders succeeded in their personal political ambitions and now many of the Muslim countries ruled by the sons and daughters of first generation of post-colonial era. Along with the Muslim kings these absolutely corrupted Muslim politicians make the Muslim people failed to realize any of fundamental dreams of independent states. Here again we can observe similarity between the former communist countries and the Muslim states of modern era. The role of the Western powers is also very dubious in both the cases. Almost all former socialist regimes were beaten up to their total collapse, no serious comprehensive policies have been adopted to address the issues of democracy and Rule of Law.

All bigger ups and downs of the human history maintain their own good potentials, those might be deviated by corrupted political forces and leadership. The Industrial Revolution did not want to be resulted into a so-called Sexual Revolution, which now can be regarded as the by-product of the first. The Muslim nations were very much reluctant to be the active partners and collaborators of Industrial Revolution and Marxist challenge to the capitalist mode of production and distribution of wealth. That was the result of the political decisions of the Muslim nationalities. But because of economic and many other reasons the Muslim people like any other people had to be involved in the main events of major historical development. The colonial legacy, the emergence of nation-states, rise and fall of communist regimes are now also part of the Muslim history. Colonial brutality and exploitation still have been burning the faces of humanity and along with all other nations the Muslim people have been paying a heavy price for that.

Like any other nation-states the Muslim countries also had/have to go through the experiments of democratic ideals and thoughts. The frequent military coups, rebel incursion, or episodic experiments in upholding Human Rights, Rule of Law, and Democracy is now are very relevant agenda of all modern states.

The writer is Fulbright Scholar and Visiting Professor, University of Illinois, USA.

To be continued

## poems

### Last night on Earth

by Fayyaz

It's the last night on Earth  
And I still haven't found a  
place to stay.  
This agonizing change of heart  
Is what's causing reality  
to dissipate.

Rain pouring night  
And candles that burn  
shadows  
Curtains, crystal, tall armchairs;  
And ghosts that pass  
by the gallows.

An immense mansion of resurrecti  
Set on a hill of common faith  
Unchangeable rules bent upon  
correction  
And the unwanted message,  
too late.

So I've been sitting here watching  
pictures collide  
A true art of self-destruction

that can be mastered only  
through time.  
Logic has been coming over lately.  
He's been beggin me to choose  
a reality  
He's offering me the possible choices.  
And blatantly  
I turn my back to the door.

### Red Embrace

I die it red  
And then I die it white  
As I hide  
behind every breath  
She is no ordinary woman  
She is the one who can take me  
through the edge of  
the boredom of sobriety.  
And into the field of amnesty.

lock will chime  
Once for the end of time  
And once for eternity

Through the struggle of living  
Witness the birth  
of divinity.  
I will embrace that moment  
with a heart of Gold.  
Live young in the passion of her soul  
As outside  
the days grow old.

I believe Love will complete me  
In its domain I will be built  
I will lie in piece s  
Only through walk through  
creation.

### The Host

Welcome to the Northside Cafe  
A cool atmosphere settles  
inside here  
as the heat blazes on  
the outside.

Stop looking in through the glass  
door;  
You know you are welcome  
inside.  
And its not me you are looking at:  
I am the mirror  
where you find faults  
that you so  
hate about yourself.

A Southern warm breeze  
greet me in a  
charming hug;  
One that I've longed for six  
weeks.  
Months of sobered greed.  
Now the feast in process  
A pleased sigh of eternity.

I feel the spirits roaming my domain;  
As if I hear voices  
that are not in  
mirrored response.  
Vanity doesn't hear any voice.  
It is a mirror for judgement;  
A relief for insecurity.