

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



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Electoral Reform Commission Should Function Within Electoral Legal Framework

Election is the process by which members in a given community or nation choose their leaders in democratic society, therefore such kind of an election should be free and fair to ensure that the leaders are acceptable to all members of the society therefore an election should give basic freedom to citizens in order to have full participation in the electoral process they should also have the right to vote secretly without vote buying.

In the last several elections held for presidency, parliament and provincial councils over the past decade, we have learned about range of structural flaws, logistical limitations and demographic changes which need to be updated and improved. Our infant dysfunctional democracy has to be institutionalized. For that, we need radical reforms, and electoral process is its fundamental to start with.

The Electoral Reform is considered a crucial need of Afghans subsequent electoral distaste emerged after the former presidential election. Nonetheless, the different position owned by the leaders of NUG is said to be the main reason for the delay. Beleaguered amongst controversy the issues of national interest were background –there are certain diplomatic issues are too lingering their fates. It is witnessed when everyone is talking about electoral reform; the internal strife really transform into a struggle for control of the electoral bodies and, ultimately, the design to turn the outcome of upcoming elections as par expectation. This is not the only conflict emerging on finalization of head of reform commission, history recorded clash of interest on account of distribution of important ministries between the variant stake-holders.

The parliamentary election is due to be held, delayed for non than undecided fate of electoral reform commission. Parliamentary elections are a very difficult challenge –given there are not set electoral rules –complicates the state of affairs. Without due electoral reform the conduction of parliamentary elections will be a difficult and challenging task. Afghanistan's a legitimate government must get committed to implementing a comprehensive program of reform to empower the Afghan constitution, thereby making the values of the Constitution a daily reality for the people of Afghanistan. Stability of the country is strengthened by a genuine political partnership between the President and the CEO, under the authority of the President. Hence, Electoral Reform is considered a crucial need of Afghans subsequent electoral distaste emerged after the former presidential election. It was too a major part of the agreement between then presidential candidates Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah after last year's disputed presidential election. It was the September 2014 agreement, the twin head of state and government agreed electoral reforms to ensure that future elections are credible. Without making needed reforms the unity government would exercise extra-constitutional authority until electoral reforms are made before conducting parliamentary and district council polls.

Finally, it was welcoming the leaders of National Unity Government finally reach to conclusion to finalize Sultan Shah Akefi as head of electoral reform commission. In total, the reform commission includes fourteen members, including a representative from the United Nations. The unity government was long awaited of heading towards this very crucial change. Anyhow, the development is well received in every section of Afghan society –even the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has welcomed the establishment of the Electoral System Reform Commission.

Abiding by the Constitution of Afghanistan, maintaining justice and transparency, being neutral, conducting work with professionalism, offering plans and recommendations, evaluating and studying the documents pertaining to the election laws, evaluating regulations and procedures, assessing the structures and capacities of the electoral institutions, finding resolutions and making proper policies for the establishment of a transparent and sustainable electoral system are the chartered responsibilities of Akifi's reform commission.

The riggers to be curbed with iron hand must position a top priority of the commission. The commission must ascertain those involved in mega scam rigging should be prosecuted. Support to corrupt individuals in the past one decade had caused election process unprecedented damage, he believed, adding that some people suggested that a mixed system of election should be introduced. The legislative bodies (upper and lower houses) must accelerate to carryout amendments to laws on polls and approve the law on the structure, duties and powers of the independent election commission and the complaints body to ensure an impartial and transparent upcoming presidential, parliamentary and provincial vote.

The electoral reforms should alleviate structural and administrative flaws in Independent Election Commission. Nomination of its chairman and members should be subjected to parliamentary approval. Parliament should also debate on other radical electoral reforms such as party laws and overhaul of Single Non-transferable Vote (SNTV). The universal issuance of computerized voter ID cards stands an indispensable requirement putting an end to probable rigging by doing away with ghost voters and fake voter lists. A mutually agreed code of conduct should be devised all the candidates and parties should operate within the jurisdiction of that electoral code. Any candidate's candidature to be subjected to interrogation incase if he intends to violate the prescribed code.

The reforms should also involve key elements, such as ensuring the independence of Afghan electoral bodies as well as transparency in how they conduct their work, promoting an electoral legal framework that supports effective participation by political and civic groups, and developing an accurate voter registry. This review could help reduce tensions among political entities, reinforce the legitimacy of Afghan governing institutions and guarantee that the will of the Afghan people is respected in future elections.



Collaborative Evolution of Progressive Ingenuity

By Asmatyari

The Progressive movement is a broad label for the various economic, social, and political reform movements that took place in the United States between 1900 and 1914. Throughout the Progressive Era, a common concern sets the tone for nearly every discussion of economic, social, and political policy: an uneasiness in the population brought about by the dramatic development of modern industry and economic and social changes. Progressivism was an expression of discontent against industrialization, individualism, immigration, and urbanization.

In 1905 American Social reformers began to call themselves Progressives. The philosophy of progressivism welcomed innovations and reforms in government to alleviate ills of society and wanted people to have more control over the government. The Progressives and, this movement, to get away from problems such as business monopolies, dishonest politics, city slums, and poor working conditions in factories and mines.

By 1900, cities were crowded with millions of poor laborers, and working conditions were appalling. Something had to be done, and the progressive movement was the nation's response. Although the progressive reformers did not fix everything, little escaped their attention. Since the political powers were unwilling or unable to address the rapid economic and social changes brought about by the industrial revolution in America, the progressive movement grew outside government and eventually forced government to take stands and deal with the growing problems. The Progressives wanted to end: segregation, unhealthy working and living conditions, and they did have success through several reforms.

The Movement was a massive assault on the problems that plagued American life at the turn of the century. Their targets included working conditions such as hours, safety, wages and job security. They attacked abuses of the capitalist system in order to preserve it, rather than replace it with socialist alternatives. They addressed moral issues such as prostitution and alcohol abuse, which they saw as contributing to domestic violence. The progressives wanted better management of businesses and political entities such as cities and counties.

The Progressives wanted more government control of business and tax reform. For too long, businesses had been too influential in the government, and the progressives felt that it was time that the government stepped in. Another economic reform that the Progressives pushed was having taxes based on income rather than property holdings. To avoid high taxes people would put their property into bonds so that it would not be taxed.

One goal that was set was to have housing regulations. Another goal was to establish a minimum wage. The reason for that was that in the factories and mines workers were working an eight-hour a day, and they were not receiving a fair wage. The Progressives also wanted safety requirements in the workplace. In some factories, the conditions were very hazardous and haphazard. By the way of the media, the Progressives wanted to increase public awareness of corruption and other problems in the businesses and the government. There were many advantages such as free passes on railroads that were given to government officials to influence their actions. The Progressives also wanted to make many political reforms. They pushed the goal for the rights of the citizens to govern themselves. The Progressives

felt that the government should be able to control big business however; they believed that the people should have more freedom in the government. They wanted to decrease the role of special interest groups in the government. They felt that they had too much power in government decisions. They wanted to make the government more honest and responsive to the needs of the citizens. The Progressives felt that the government had been ignoring the needs of the people and were too engaged in political problems. They wanted to create more of an active, stronger role for the Federal government to protect the public interests.

During the Movement, many influential individuals helped keep the movement running. Part of the movement came from a group of journalists known as muckrakers. Theodore Roosevelt gave them this name because he felt that the muckrakers were making people discontented by pointing out what was wrong with society. The muckrakers felt that unless people got angry about society wrongs, then they would not fight for change. One of influential Muckraker at this time was Upton Sinclair. He wrote the book *The Jungle*. In this book, he describes in graphic detail the lives of stockyard workers and the operations of the meat packing industry. Along with being a muckraker, he was also an on and off member of the Socialist Party.

Unfortunately, during the Progressive era, many minorities failed to take important steps to reform, but African Americans became the exception. Asian immigrants were heavily disregarded while American Indians became seen as inferior. Many whites believed it would take several generations before the American Indian could function normally in American society. Because of the stereotype, they were regulated to minimal paying unskilled jobs. Blacks on the other hand made great strides during the Progressive era. Blacks wanted to be equal and lift themselves up in their own way instead of conforming to white society as Washington suggested. They marched on Washington and demanded the unrestricted right to vote as well as an end to all forms of segregation, equality of economic opportunity, higher education, equal justice in courts and an end to trade union discrimination. These demands stirred many whites abroad and set the groundwork for the civil rights movement. Blacks also became proud of themselves forming organizations to create pride for black heritage.

The Progressives also made political reforms. The Progressives worked to end corruption in law enforcement, public transportation, and other city services. They also worked to increase the political power of the voters. In 1904, the Direct Primary Law was passed. This law allowed voters to nominate candidates. The Progressive era came about as the result of several motives. The forces behind it ranged from the common person to the politicians as well as intellectuals. The progressive era evidently shaped up to be quite a significant part of our history.

Currently, Afghanistan passes through myriad of problems that includes economical, social and political. Economical disparity, social dissonance and political immaturity are the underlying problems, needs immediate redressal. The most genuine concern rests to our security and democratic stability post US draw down that should be devised and planned. The national integrity and social harmony can be strengthened only when socio-political and economical prejudices are done away with, by collaborative evolution of a progressive ingenuity.

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Peace Parley – An Interminable Game

By Hujjatullah Zia

Pakistan said the spike in deadly terrorist attacks across Afghanistan, which Islamabad condemns, underscores the need for peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. "We very much condemn all the terrorist attacks in Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan and we have constantly worked with the Afghan government to try to restrict movements across the borders so that no terrorist goes from here to commit any act there," Pakistan's national security adviser Sartaj Aziz is quoted as saying. He said Pakistan can persuade the Taliban to re-engage in talks with the Afghan government only after the group resolves its leadership problem.

Following the deadly attacks in Kabul, the tension soared between Afghanistan and Pakistan and President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah lashed out at Pakistan. Therefore, Afghanistan's High Peace Council (HPC) members called on the international community to supervise the peace talks as they believe that without this the talks between Afghanistan and the Taliban will not succeed. Qazi Mohammad Amin Waqad, a member of the HPC believed that if UN leads peace talk in Pakistan and China with its presence, the Taliban will also show resilience and then the international community can monitor the talks – that will be fruitful. He also asserted that the Taliban had no authority and were unable to make decisive decisions. "If one day they are invited to talks and the other day to bombing, this will never work," he maintained.

Off late, the Taliban's internal conflict over the succession of the late Mullah Omar, which stalled peace talk, was a highly controversial issue and loomed large in national and international media. Many Taliban elements churmed out to a large extent against and in favor of Mullah Akhtar Mansoor as Omar's successor. With the introduction of Mansoor as Omar's succession, a conflict surfaced among the Taliban militants – who were operating under a single banner. As a result, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) has already been divided into two groups, insiders say. "Musa Aaga, who is leading Tahir Jan Yuldashev's group, has pledged allegiance to Mullah Mansoor," said a source, "and Abdul Aziz Yaldiv and his companions have joined the IS." Similarly, a number of the Taliban insurgents are also said to have sworn allegiance to the IS group in Afghanistan. Hence, this is a severe blow to the Taliban which has led to their split. Currently, the Taliban, al-Qaeda and some foreign politicians behind smokescreen endeavor to bring the splinter group back under the same banner. As a result, it was reported that Al-Qaeda's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri on Thursday pledged his group's allegiance to Mansoor – who is facing a bitter struggle over his leadership. "As emir of Al-Qaeda,

I pledge to you our allegiance, following the path of Sheikh (Osama) bin Laden and his martyred brothers in their allegiance to Mullah Omar," Zawahiri is quoted as saying in a recording.

Mansoor, a longtime trusted deputy of Omar, is taking charge as the movement faces growing internal divisions and is threatened by the rise of the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group, which is making inroads in Afghanistan.

Zawahiri's pledge comes as Al-Qaeda also faces a growing rivalry for pre-eminence in the global jihadist movement with IS, which has seized control of large parts of Syria and Iraq. Moreover, with the first emergence of IS group, Zawahiri called it a religious radical and expressed his hatred to that. In other words, al-Qaeda and Taliban share common ideology, however the IS's ideology is far more extreme.

However, it is believed that the Taliban and al-Qaeda compete with IS in killing the innocent civilians in Afghanistan and their ideology is as radical as IS. Recently, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said that in their latest findings for the first six months of this year, UNAMA's 2015 Midyear Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict documented 4,921 civilian casualties. Of those were 1,592 deaths and 3,329 injured between January and June. This is a one percent increase against the same period last year. However, in the first six months of 2015, UNAMA documented a 23 percent increase in women casualties and a 13 percent increase in children casualties. Based on this report, the vast majority – or 90 per cent – of civilian casualties resulted from ground engagements, improvised explosive devices, complex and suicide attacks and targeted killings. "Until peace is achieved, all parties to the conflict must fulfill their obligations under international humanitarian law to minimize the impact of the conflict on civilians and match their public statements on the protection of civilians with concrete actions," UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Nicholas Haysom said. He further stated that anti-government elements continued to cause the most harm despite a slight reduction in total civilian casualties. UNAMA attributed 70 per cent of civilian casualties to their activities.

The Taliban's dual policy i.e. carrying out terrorist acts on the one hand and sitting on the table of negotiation on the other hand has prompted fury among the Afghan officials. Hence, peace talk remains in ambiguity and less hopeful. The question is that if even the Taliban elements resume peace talks with the leadership of Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, will not the splinter group continue militancy in Afghanistan? I believe that they are the real "detractor and spoiler" and Omar's demise was a real tragedy for the Taliban. Isn't it time to end this interminably political game – which has never born the desired fruit?

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