

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



August 26, 2015

Economy Decides the Political Structure

Economy has a decisive role in development and growth of a country. Without stable economy it would be an illusion to think about order and stability in other fields of life. It can be observed in today's world that the countries with stable economies are dominant in various areas, the most important of which is politics. The international political arena is basically overshadowed by giant economies. Just consider the level of influence that the developed countries, like USA, UK and China have in contemporary international politics.

Politics is the game of power and power erupts from money, while money is generated through a proper economic infrastructure. The term power, in the international politics, may relate to different sorts of influences that may affect various decisions in international relations. Whether it is conflict or agreement, diplomacy or war, international organizations or national policies, power has a decisive role. And, that power rests with the countries that have large GDPs and great businesses. Therefore, it is easy to see the world powers have strong influence and say in different diplomatic undertakings and conflicts and wars in international political order. In fact, the current political order is designed by the most dominant economies among the developed nations of the world. The current political order, wherein capitalism and democracy have joined hands and reign most parts of the world is not very different from what the gigantic capitalist economies want them to be.

A thorough study of economy and politics will reveal that economy is the root of a political system. For example, when human societies mostly had agriculturalist economies, there were no democracies and the political systems were based on monarchy and landlordism. However, as the societies evolved to industrialized economies there was a shift towards democracy. Thus, economy to a great extent decides the form and nature of the political system and, therefore, instable economy gives rise to instable political order and stable ones gives birth to stable political systems.

It can also be observed that the societies where the people are mostly poor and do not have the facilities of life, there are more chances of political upheavals. The discontented people, suffering from destitution would ultimately strive to overthrow the political order and would never respect such a system. Resultantly, it can be said that the societies that are economically instable are more prone to revolutions, disturbances and chaos. The third world countries can be observed in this regard. As the people are poor, do not have basic requirements of life and suffer from unemployment, they are more vulnerable to be the cause of instability. And, that is why we find them to be more attracted towards rebellions, crimes, terrorism and thus instability.

Afghanistan is one of the countries where economic instability has given birth to political instability. As there is no stable economic infrastructure, the country's democratic structure has shaky foundations. In Afghanistan insecurity has been influencing the economic life to a large extent. Both national and international businessmen are not readily willing to invest in all the sectors and they do not see positive prospects of their businesses. As insecurity has been overwhelmingly influencing the country, the development in the basic infrastructure has been meager.

The doubts and uncertainties of the Afghan market have made the international investors to think thousand times before they take an initiative to start their businesses in the country. Though there are great opportunities in Afghanistan and the country is blessed with different types of mineral and other natural resources, the economic infrastructure has not been able to get enough attention.

Apart from that there are other factors as well that have been influencing the economic system of Afghanistan. The insufficient and unfavorable business environment is also one of the issues affecting Afghan economy. There have to be strong business laws governing the society and controlling the business. The laws should not only safeguard the rights of investors and businessmen but also make sure that the competition within the system is maintained on strong and fair footings. The evils like monopoly based on unfair competition must be tackled with properly and there should be strong bodies that control the prices within the markets, which at the present are non-existent and the businessmen are fixing the rates on their own. This has given rise to a political system that, on the exterior, is called as democratic but in reality is an ad-hoc arrangement that has no strong foundation.

Afghan economy, therefore, require structured development towards a capitalist society. And in this regard, businesses can play a vital role. If within a system there are consistent investments and different businesses, the system is on a track towards development and prosperity. Since the very inception of human society, human beings have required businesses so as to have their requirements fulfilled. Throughout human history, businesses have taken different forms and characteristics and today have reached to a very advanced form. From the barter system to today's advanced era when the businesses are taking place online, there has been a series of different practices, but the vitality of the business has never been lost. Having developed its economic infrastructure based on capitalism or free market economy marked with stability, Afghanistan's political system can continue its journey towards a truly democratic country dominated by stability.



The Declining Public Confidence

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

The public in Afghanistan is increasingly growing skeptical to the future of the country. The deteriorating security situation and the declining economy are believed to be key factors behind the loss of public confidence in the country. According to reports, the trend of migration of Afghan citizens to neighboring countries and elsewhere is increasing by each day, getting out of control of the government. In recent month, officials at the passport directorate have been struggling to cope with the sharp increase of applications for passport. The officials have warned that unless specific measures are taken, the issue would turn into a serious problem in the country. On the other hand, polls carried out to assess performance of the National Unity Government suggest that the level of public satisfaction over performance of the new government is extremely low with only about 20 percent happy with the government's performance.

The staggering rise of migration of Afghans and the critically low popularity of the new government are only few indications of how the public see the current situation and predict the future. These are clear signal of loss of public confidence to the performance of the National Unity Government (NUG) and the security condition of the country. Obviously, the most important factor behind the growing public concerns regarding the future is the continued war and violence in the country. Afghanistan has witnessed decades of violence and the people are desperate for finding peace and stability in the country. The Afghan public, who has grown weary of the interminable violence in the country, is seeing the future in the same way they have seen the past. The hopes of the people for a prosperous future and peaceful life are dashed by a prolonged conflict between the government and the militant groups.

The majority of Afghans now do not feel secure as the widespread insecurity is taking lives of civilians and military personnel each day. People are worried about safety and security of their children and family members and fear of their sons and daughters being deprived of education due to the prolonged instability in the country. In big cities, security concerns have become daily worries of the people. The new Taliban offensive in 2015 and sharp increase in level of violence across the country have considerably worsened the situation, impacting public views. In last two years, violence has expanded into larger swathes of the country, engulfing areas that were previously considered as relatively secure. This year the militants managed to expand the war into the Northern provinces and start to wage a bloody campaign against the government of Afghanistan. At the same time, different militant groups with ambiguous motives have emerged in eastern provinces. The deteriorating security has left the public with the notion that the new government is incapable of fighting the insurgency and maintaining security. The ongoing crisis in the country obscures Afghanistan's future as there is no prospect of resolving the long-lasting conflict

in a near future. The Afghan peace process seems to have stalled after the recent developments with the Taliban's leadership and the worsened relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Despite some considerable progresses regarding the peace efforts, a peaceful settlement of the conflict remains a distant goal for the government of Afghanistan. It is quite difficult to see if the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban as the main insurgent group share any common ground over how and by what deal-makings to resolve the conflict. Given the unstated preconditions of the two sides in the recent talks, it is difficult to assume a ground for negotiations and a possible agreement between the insurgents and the Afghan government. Given the geostrategic developments in the region and the multi-faceted crises in the region and the Muslim world, the level of violence is likely to further increase in the country. This could potentially exacerbate the current worries of the citizens regarding the future of the country.

Watching the spreading violence and insecurity in the region and the Middle East, there is a visible panic among the public over security of the country. With chaos in many Middle Eastern countries propelling millions to seek shelter in other countries and continents, Afghans are also joining the global trend of migration into Europe and neighboring countries. The panic stemmed from global crises and the current trend of migration seems to be playing a key role in driving Afghans to leave the country in search of protection and employment. The current panic would inevitably continue until the global trend of migration is curbed or the economic and security conditions inside are improved.

Afghanistan's lagging economic recovery is known as another major factor turning the people skeptical to their future. With the withdrawal of the NATO-led international forces, the flow of international aid declined considerably, affecting Afghanistan's economy which was already under strain from the prolonged conflict and the controversial presidential elections. With the economic recession and decline of international aid beginning as early as in 2013, many Afghans lost their sources of making a living while others faced increased financial challenges. This is while the rate of unemployment in the country has risen exponentially. In this circumstance it is quite natural to see more and more people leave the country in search of employment and protection from wars and violence.

The fact is various factors are playing roles in the worrisome trend of public dissatisfaction with the existing situation in the country. The public expectation in Afghanistan has been increased by the leaders of the National Unity Government through the last election campaigns. It is now crucially difficult for the government to meet an increased public expectation coincided with the two major political and security transitions in the country. But there is no alternative for the Afghan government. It should be able to improve the security and economic situations or the crisis would further deepen.

Abdul Ahad Bahrami is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at ahad.bahrami@gmail.com

Women's Vulnerability to Social and Domestic Harms

By Hujjatullah Zia

A woman usually bears the brunt of social and domestic challenges in our community. Her role is underestimated, her achievements are turned blind eye and her rights and dignity are trampled upon. She is treated as an inferior creature and a second-class citizen. Similarly, she is doomed to live under men's subjugation and do the household chores in dark and dusty kitchens twenty-four/seven.

Cultural restrictions hold strong sway in our patriarchal society - mainly in villages. Women are preferred to live within the four walls engage in domestic chores. The traditional parents are not much willing to let their daughters attend school. I presume that only one out of ten female students will be able to continue her education. A relatively large number of girls are made marry at an early age - mostly not to the men of their choice - to abandon school. Illiteracy keeps them in the dark about their rights and deprives them of playing social role in the society. Hence, cultural barriers, which stem from closed mind, diminish women's public role.

Women's dignity is violated without an iota of humanity. They frequently fall victim to rape and honor killing. The whole fabric of society discriminates against them in some ways. Being traumatized by tarnished reputation, the judicial systems hardly side with female victims - the public believe. Once the feeling of a rape victim was seriously hurt for being called "prostitute" by a policeman - this truly reflects the attitude of people in positions of authority towards women.

A woman's life is likely to be at a higher risk in Afghanistan. Her life is threatened not only by the militants in public places but also by her male partner at home. Her head is banged on the wall, her nose is lopped off and her throat is slit for no particular reason.

Based on traditional custom, a woman has to tolerate her partner's abusive attitude without raising her eyebrows. Her dignity lies in being patient in the face of all humiliating treatment. In villages, lucky is a girl who marries of her own free will and luckier is she who finds the man of her choice. Forced and early marriages are practiced widely in remote areas of the community. In case of eloping with the man of her choice, a girl will be killed on the spot - this is rampant among the tribal belts.

Poverty plays a detrimental role in the life of Afghan women. A day hardly passes without violence for the impoverished families. In other words, the bulk of violence stems from poverty and

neediness. In poor families, children are deprived of education and labor on the street, in factories, etc., from dawn to dusk to alleviate their parents' economic challenges. After all, the girls are forced to marry on an early age on the ground of financial supports to their parents - it does not matter if their own life turns to hell.

The cycle of violence against women never stops, as if they are born to suffer their whole life. Traditional mindsets, misogynistic views, social barriers, patriarchal system and so on embitter the life of Afghan women from early childhood to her death. Many Afghan women take their ambitions to the grave with them. Just imagine the life of an innocent girl who is forced to get married at an early age. Destined to this untoward fate, she is supposed to live her whole life with a hated man under the same roof. Besides slaving in a kitchen for long hours, her share of life is no more than mental and physical tortures imposed by her husband. Her reaction to her husband's cruel action will be followed by physical punishment. She has no choice other than bearing and grin it. In cases of domestic violence, women are forced to reconcile with the perpetrators of violence, often the husband. Even if the matter reaches the court, the general attitude is that there should always be reconciled, leaving the victims without legal protection and at the mercy of their violent relatives and abusive partners.

Moreover, the Taliban militants pose serious threat to Afghan women. Their freedom is curtailed to a high extent and they fear to take active part in social and political arenas, especially in insecure parts of the country. The deadly attacks on female politicians and killing of policewomen, that frequently occurred last year, reflect the same fact. As a result, Parveena, a policewoman who used only one name, was shot dead by two militants in her area. A report said that Parveena was on her way home from a visit to her parents in a remote corner of eastern Afghanistan with her children by her side and a small group of women. Two men, their faces covered by kaffiyehs, pulled up on a motor scooter. "Who is Parveena, daughter of Sardar?" said one, looking at the group of women, their faces hidden behind blue burqas. No one answered. One of the men took his Kalashnikov and used the muzzle to lift the burqa of the nearest woman - in conservative Afghan society, a gesture akin to undressing her in public. It was Parveena. She grabbed the muzzle and said, "Who is asking?" But the gunmen had seen her face, and they fired 11 bullets into her. Many Afghan females fear the same fate and avoid engaging in military, political and social activities.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.