

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



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Why Political Socialization is Important?

Political socialization is both a formal and informal process of social and educative learning, by which political attitudes, skill, priorities and beliefs are intentionally and unintentionally absorbed by the individuals or citizens. Being a significant process, it orientates the people towards a particular type of political behavior, philosophy and ideology. At the same time, it causes stability or instability, continuity or change and strength or weakness in a political system, and in the government of the country. It determines the type of participation in politics and government by the people. It is, without any doubt, the political aspect of the general process of socialization which is always taking place in every society and culture.

Political learning begins early in family life, when the child is still young, when different treatment of the little boys and girls produces different political attitudes and behavior in them. Generally speaking, boys are expected to be active in politics, while girls are deliberately denied political orientation and participation by their parents and other people around them. Class differences also produce differences in political attitudes and behavior. Rich stratum of the society expects that its members should learn political skills and the attitude of domination or superiority. On the other hand, the poor people, in most of the cases are humble and docile and they socialize their children in the same way. Therefore, their attitudes and behavior are mostly submissive.

There are different agents of political socialization. Some of them are relatively active and instill the political attitude among the individuals in a compelling manner, while some others are passive in this regard and do not directly promulgate such socialization. Family is among the active agents of political socialization. Most of the basic political socialization takes place within the family. In tribal societies, like Afghanistan, the political socialization within the family is also influenced by certain groups that are outside the family; such as tribes, casts, clans and ethnicities.

Another powerful agent is educational institution. Not only the political attitudes and beliefs of the teachers influence their pupils but civic education is purposely imparted to them. This is one reason why certain subjects relate to the civic education. Moreover, patriotism is also taught in schools by different methods. However, certain formal and modern ways through which basic political understanding can be taught to the children in school are not taught to the children. Mostly, in our country, such education is not part of school course.

Among the other agents of political socialization, TVs, radios, newspapers and journals, political parties, pressure groups and interest groups are the most dominant ones. Sometimes, the influences of these agents are deliberate and consciously inculcated but most often they are not so. In addition, their influence produces some destabilizing effect on the growing minds of young people as they sometimes learn the political cynicism of the adults around them. Resultantly, they start downgrading political sentiments of loyalty and patriotism. This sort of dichotomy in political socialization, in certain cases, causes the phenomenon of revolt of the youth, more dominantly among the college and university students. Meanwhile, in certain strictly ideological countries, deliberate political socialization, even indoctrination is considered as one of the primary duties of the state.

Once an individual is properly socialized in politics, he can then participate actively in political matters. Such participation is really important for a society, particularly when the society is based on a democratic political system. Democracy demands from the people that they should be vigilant and participatory so that they have their share of participation in the matters of the state. Properly politicized person, having enough political awareness, can have continuous look over the decisions of the government, the policies of the policy makers and the decisions of different political institutions. They are also in a position to take actions, which may be necessary if the decisions and the policies are not for the advantage of the people.

Unfortunately, politics is considered to be very much negative in our society and different institutions, other than the political ones, make sure that they are not politicized in any manner. They keep their members away from politics and advise them to keep a distance from it. In such circumstances, the individuals start losing confidence from politics and consider it to be an evil instead of a blessing. This gives rise to individuals who are not fully aware of their political circumstances and can easily be fooled by the politicians and utilized in different ways by them.

Man is a political being. If he is not interested in politics, politics is interested in him; therefore, he must make efforts to have political awareness and understanding and also strive so that the younger generations are also socialized properly in this regard. The different institutions in the society should also take steps to facilitate the political socialization so that we have a politically aware and active young generation.



Impatience and Absurdity – The Products of Facebook

By Mohammad Baqirian

Social media hold strong sway and led to great evolution around the globe. This evolution is multifarious; i.e., having both positive and negative aspects, which is common with many issues. With the development of human societies and technological advancement, people participated in using social media on a larger scale around the world. Within several years, people received several kinds of social media in their daily life: Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, What's up, Viber, Emo and so on and many more will enter market in the future.

After years, Facebook and other kinds of social media also entered our society. Out of all, Facebook was welcomed wholeheartedly and this network absorbed the attention of a large number of individuals. Likewise, the number of users is increasing with each passing day. In the beginning, only those who lived in the cities had access to this social network; however, the activation of internet developed using this network in every nook and cranny. Currently, scores of people use this network in remote areas as well.

To ponder over this issue, this network put both positive and negative impact on people. Nevertheless, the negative effect is believed to outweigh the positive one. Our people are deeply involved in the quagmire of its disadvantages. This commentary will point out the disadvantages and negative usages of this social media. The level of knowledge and intellectual ability are extremely low in Afghanistan. Therefore, our people were left at the mercy of this media and their attitudes and relations were changed dramatically. One of the consequences was that people began to grow impatient. That is to say, the Facebook users ran impatient and hasty so quickly.

Indeed, Facebook led to widespread impatience in the society and the outcome was to say farewell to profound texts, effective mentalities and books. With the influence of Facebook, our people changed into careless readers and had no mood for going through deep and rich content of books. The level of study also reduced on a large scale or replaced by Facebook. One has no mood to study deeply.

We are accustomed to scrolling down our Facebook and going through superficial writings and glancing at them in the blink of an eye. This issue has affected us to the extent that there is no more patience for studying one or two pages of a book or study for one or at least half an hour. On the contrary, we are highly absorbed in Facebook spending hours of our precious time on it. To sum up, we are ready to use

Facebook for hours but not study for twenty minutes or so. What I mean by studying is going through pages of book with tendency rather than glancing at chapters. Perhaps, one will open pages of university text books with boredom but this is done under duress not out of inclination. We must study books with the strong tendency as using Facebook. Do we really study books in this way?

It should be noted that a cursory reading will be really detrimental to our society. Our energy and intellectual abilities are widely spent on using Facebook and we gain nothing in return other than wasting our time.

Book has been tremendously marginalized in our social life and the valuable ideas included in books which will remedy our problems are ignored. So, Facebook and the models observed in Facebook are changed into our life guide.

Our sentimental attitudes and superficiality are changed into our daily practices. We do not ponder over this issue with pinpoint accuracy. It is most likely that our people will change into careless readers, emotional and impatient individuals, in the future, as a result of being deeply absorbed in Facebook. With disregarding books, social absurdity and ignorance will be widespread.

The next adverse effect of using Facebook in our family and community is dismantling our emotional bond and emptying our home from sincere relations among the family members. Facebook infiltrated our life in a way that we are distanced from our family members rather than gathering and enjoying sincere talks. Although we are together physically, but distant from one another mentally and emotionally. Brothers, sisters, fathers, etc. gather in a single place deeply engaged in Facebook. We are unaware of one another and our demands and needs but focus on Facebook. In other words, we forget the real people sitting beside us but concentrate on people in the cyberspace and our real world has been victimized by cyberspace. We disregard the real pain and sufferings of our brothers and sisters but sympathize with those who reveal their pain in cyberspace.

To put it succinctly, lack of emotion is widespread and being absorbed in Facebook targets our emotional bonds and may lead to dismantling our family relations. Hence, using Facebook negatively and being obsessed with it will be highly dangerous to our individual and social life. We need to focus our attention on real world rather than cyberspace so that we should no more feel impatient.

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The Achilles Heel of Putin's Regime

By Anders Åslund

Russian President Vladimir Putin's authority is weaker than it seems. In fact, the bedrock of Putin's power – the clientelist economic arrangements that he has assiduously consolidated over the past generation – has become the main threat to his political survival. The reason is simple: the lack of credible property rights under Putin's system of crony capitalism forces senior Russian officials and oligarchs to hold their money abroad, largely within the jurisdictions of the Western governments against which Putin rails. With the help of carefully selected loyalists, Putin has established three circles of power: the state, state-owned corporations, and loyalists' "private" companies. The process began during his tenure as chairman of the Federal Security Service, from 1998 to 1999, when he wielded control over the secret police.

But it was Putin's first term as president, from 2000 to 2004, that amounts to a true masterpiece of power consolidation by a budding authoritarian. First, in the summer of 2000, he took charge of Russian television. Next, he established his "vertical of power" over the state administration and the regional administrations, as well as his "dictatorship of law" over the judicial system. And then, in the 2003 parliamentary election, Putin gained solid control over both the State Duma (the lower house) and the Federation Council (the upper house) of the Russian legislature. At the pinnacle of state power, the Security Council, he installed three KGB generals: Sergei Ivanov, Nikolai Patrushev, and Aleksandr Bortnikov. To strengthen the second circle of his power, Putin seized control over the state corporations one by one, beginning with Gazprom in May 2001, by appointing loyalists as chief executives and chairmen. The three top managers of state-owned companies are Igor Sechin of Rosneft, Aleksei Miller of Gazprom, and Sergei Chemezov of Rostec.

Putin clinched his authority over the state sector in 2007, during his second term, with the creation of vast corporations that have since expanded substantially, with cheap state funding, often securing monopolies in their industries. Because these companies are treated as a source of power and rents, rather than of economic growth, they are peculiarly disinterested in competition, innovation, entrepreneurship, and productivity. The only relevant standard of corporate governance is loyalty to Putin.

Then there is the third circle of power, comprising Putin's most powerful cronies – the top four appear to be Gennady Timchenko, Arkady Rotenberg, Yuri Kovalchuk, and Nikolai Shamalov – and their companies. Their behavior is usually viewed as kleptocratic, though Putin has used his legislative authority to ensure that many of their dubious activities are technically legal. For example, cronies are entitled to buy assets from state companies at discretionary prices and fill government procurement orders with no competition.

The system Putin has created is strikingly similar to the czarist system that prevailed until the "Great Reforms" of the

1860s. Indeed, Putin is often called a new czar, because his power is legally unlimited (though his preoccupation with opinion polls shows that public sentiment does matter). Rather than promoting institutional development, he has pursued far-reaching deinstitutionalization, aimed at concentrating executive, legislative, and judicial powers in his own hands.

But in the absence of credible property rights, wealthy Russians, including Putin's own cronies, know that the only safe places to keep their assets are abroad. And, thanks to a fully convertible ruble and the absence of restrictions on capital outflows, they can transfer their gains to offshore tax havens. This has naturally created a fourth circle of power, over which Putin has no control: the offshore tax havens themselves. And those havens are no longer as secure as they once were.

With the Financial Action Task Force having reduced bank secrecy in Switzerland and cleaned up the many small island tax havens, there are two major remaining destinations: the United States and the United Kingdom, both of which permit anonymous currency inflows and allow asset owners to hide their identity. In the US, tens of billions of dollars move through law firms' opaque bank accounts each year, facilitating money laundering.

In general, Western governments do not really exert much control over such activities within their borders. In fact, while the assets of Putin's cronies in the US and the European Union are supposed to be frozen, according to the sanctions imposed after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, hardly any have been found.

It is time to change this, by initiating comprehensive investigations into the assets of sanctioned people. The US and the UK, which presumably hold the vast majority of Russian offshore wealth, must also catch up with their counterparts in most of Europe by prohibiting the anonymity of beneficiary owners. The US should also proscribe the use of attorney-client privilege to transfer anonymous or dirty money into the country.

The good news is that progress may be on the horizon. A new bill, which US President Donald Trump signed into law on August 2, calls for far-reaching investigations into "senior foreign political figures and oligarchs in the Russian Federation" – including "spouses, children, parents, and siblings" – and their assets within 180 days.

As the veteran liberal Russian politician Leonid Gogman points out, "To judge from the statements of our propagandists, the Russian state is very valuable," but it is also "a very fragile construct that can be destroyed by anything," from the fight against corruption to efforts to oust kleptocratic officials. Given the vast stocks of Russian capital that have piled up in New York, London, and elsewhere, the West is ideally positioned to exploit this fragility. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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