

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



August 30, 2018

Challenges before Afghanistan's anti-Corruption Campaign

Corruption is an overwhelming issue in Afghanistan's government machinery and has wreaked havoc on the country's economy and shredded its international reputation. The crackdown of National Unity Government on corruption within the last two years failed to put an end to this syndrome.

Last year, Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Afghanistan 177th out of 180, trailing only Syria, South Sudan and Somalia. This indicates that Afghanistan made no progress in ending corruption within the last 17 years.

There are several reasons behind the corruption lingers in the government's body. First, the warlords and corrupt political figures, who occupied high governmental posts following the collapse of the Taliban's regime, violate the law with impunity. A number of MPs are purportedly involved in land grabbing, illegal mining and other such activities in the country and some mid to high-level police officers "collaborate with criminals in smuggling, kidnapping for ransom and other illegal activities". For example, in the Kabul Bank scandal, which saw roughly \$900 million lost to fraud, political elites, including cabinet ministers, MPs and warlords, were involved. Second, bribery prevailing in the judicial system left it dysfunctional and criminals go unpunished. That is, the poor law enforcement could not alleviate corruption.

Third, the "corrupt networks" are involved not only in bribery, fraud or extortion but also in cultivating and smuggling drugs. The Taliban fighters are the main beneficiary of drug trafficking and illegal economies.

Being frustrated with meager progress in fighting corruption, the NUG established the Anti-Corruption Justice Center (ACJC) in 2016 and reopened investigation into the Kabul Bank corruption scandal. In March, the ACJC convicted four Urban Development and Housing Ministry officials on charges of embezzlement and abuse of power and sentenced them on the basis of law.

The NUG has made fighting corruption a priority since taking office. Starting from Kabul Bank scandal, Ghani's administration has now ushered in pressing warlords. To ensure the transparency of upcoming parliamentary election and mitigate corruption, the names of some warlords, who are allegedly involved in illegal activities, have been removed from the list of candidates under the NUG.

The anti-corruption campaign seems to be seasonal rather than being in an organized way and therefore the efforts made in the past three years did not bear the desired result. For example, although the Former Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdul Razaq Wahidi was suspended and prosecuted after being accused of corruption and misuse of power, the 10 percent tax levied on public mobile credit cards still remain ambiguous and the government is not able to give a transparent detail to people. Above all, Wahidi's trial was widely claimed to be due to his political orientation and ethnic background as he was exonerated by the court. There are several challenges before the anti-corruption campaign. For instance, a number of political figures who are accused of corruption have fled the country and the government is not able to prosecute them. Likewise, the powerful and influential figures still perpetrate crime with impunity. In short, they use their leverage in judicial system. In such a case, the law is not applied equally on all individuals.

The unmitigated insurgency and involvement of Mafia members in the issue are the second obstacle before fighting corruption. Due to the insurgency, local courts are not able to function properly and the government lacks control over the restive areas. Worst, the Taliban support cultivating and smuggling drug in such areas.

Meanwhile, due to the presence of some corrupt officials in the government's machinery and their involvement in illegal activities, there seems to be no strong will for fighting corruption.

As the government is constitutionally obliged to "maintain public law and order and eliminate every kind of administrative corruption", it has to fight against corruption on the basis of law and far from political or ethnic tendency and implement the law on all - be it grassroots or officials - equally.

It goes without saying that only one institution is not able to tackle the deep-rooted corruption. To eradicate this problem, all the government institutions will have to work in line with one another. If all the three powers, i.e. the legislative, executive and judicial powers, move parallel with one another in a genuine way, the bulk of the challenges will be resolved in the country. But if a single of them remains behind, the problems will continue unabated. Hence, the government will have to start fighting corruption from within and bring the high-ranking corrupt figures into justice.

The zero-sum game does not meet Pak- India Interest

By Dekai Huang, Jiao Nie & Yunsong

Pakistan's new Prime Minister Imran Khan has shown the signs to improve India-Pakistan relations on various occasions. Firstly, he delivered an actively signal in public to improve the relations with India in his victory speech on July 31; A day earlier, in his telephone conversation with Narendra Modi, he claimed that he was willing to push forward India-Pakistan relations and would seek the chances to dialogue with India so as to resolve the Kashmir conflict as much as possible; Later on August 23, Imran Khan expressed on Twitter that Pakistan was willing to provide humanitarian aid to Indian flood-ravaged areas. In this regard, Indian Prime Minister Modi also made responses positively. In his conversation with Imran Khan, Modi expressed his expectation of regional peace and stability while congratulating Imran Khan's victory in the election, especially emphasizing on how to ease tensions between India and Pakistan. Recently, leaders of both India and Pakistan have expressed their willingness to improve bilateral relations which are at the dawn of the day. India and Pakistan have been in a state of "zero-sum game" for a long time, does the change of attitudes of the two leaders mean a new dawn for the peace and development of the Indian subcontinent?

India and Pakistan are neighbours, and the two countries are inextricably linked with each other in their geographical, ethnic, historical and religious cultures. However, due to the deep-seated contradiction between India and Pakistan, there have been long-standing contradictions between the two countries in the historical legacy, territorial disputes, religious conflicts, cultural barriers and international situation. Frictions and conflicts between the two sides have been continuing, and the relations between India and Pakistan have been caught in a "zero-sum game" state for a long time. What needs to be pointed out is that India and Pakistan have also cooperated in not attacking each other's nuclear facilities, strengthening cultural exchanges and avoiding dual taxation and achieved certain results initially, this was called a "good start" in improving the relations between the two countries by the former Indian Prime Minister Gandhi. It can be seen from the historical practice that India and Pakistan have tried to improve the relations between the two countries. The relaxation of relations between India and Pakistan is conducive to the peaceful development of the Indian subcontinent. At the same time, this is the inexorable outcome of the readjustment of the thinking of the leaders of both countries.

The relations between India and Pakistan are known as "feud", since independence, more than 70 years of frictions and conflicts between the two countries have resulted in huge obstacles in political mutual trust, economic mutual benefit, security dependence and cultural exchanges between the two countries. Nevertheless, in the long-term game, India and Pakistan have gradually realized that if they do not take into account each other's interests and only focus on maximizing their own interests, they will fall into the trap of "no solution", which is merely not conducive to resolving frictions and conflicts; but will even trigger more disputes and conflicts. Conversely, if state acts are carried out on the premise of proper compromise or consideration of the interests of the other side, it will be beneficial to reducing the possibility of confrontation and conflict more often, increasing effective political trust between the two sides, and further enhance the possibility of bilateral cooperation.

Moreover, the concerns of the two countries for the future also contribute to further cooperation. The will of the leaders of India and Pakistan in the future will help defuse the conflicts and build mutual trust, and will be conducive to improving bilateral relations and promoting mutual cooperation. At present, Pakistan's new Prime Minister Imran Khan's proposal to build a "new Pakistan" coincides with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposal of a "new India", both aiming to build a country that is clean in politics, strong in economy, guaranteed in medical education, concerned about vulnerable groups, and not poisoned by terrorism and corruption. The pursuit of common goals allows India and Pakistan have huge space and potential for cooperation.

The establishment of the new Pakistan government sheds a great deal of light on the peace and development of the South Asian subcontinent. Through the strategy of reciprocity, the efforts made by the two countries to improve bilateral relations will be bound to benefit the two peoples. Despite that the gradual improvement of India-Pakistan relations is just beginning, it is certain that both leaders of India and Pakistan will pay attention to strengthening dialogues and communication, jointly addresses the issues of mutual concern, and also constantly abandoning the thinking of "zero-sum game". It can be foreseen that the easing of India-Pakistan relations conduces to propelling the Indian subcontinent into a region of peace and prosperity.

Dekai Huang, Jiao Nie & Yunsong Zhou, Scholars, School of International Studies, Yunnan University, P.R. China

Standing Up for the UN

By Dominique Moisi

It was the autumn of 2001, sometime between the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States and US President George W. Bush's invasion of Afghanistan. I was walking through Venice with Richard C. Holbrooke, who had been the US ambassador to the United Nations under President Bill Clinton. Holbrooke's mobile phone rang. On the line was then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Holbrooke had expected the call. He and Annan spoke with the warm confidence born of their cooperation during Clinton's second term. Annan, a kind of civilian pope, had forged a partnership with Holbrooke, the master diplomat who had been instrumental in ending the Bosnian War. It was a partnership that both men considered to be essential for global peace and stability.

This cooperative dynamic went beyond Annan and Holbrooke. The UN, as the quintessential symbol of international legitimacy and the rule of law, and the US, as the embodiment of pragmatic power and force, had a kind of alliance. As we mourn the recent death of Annan, perhaps we should also mourn that alliance - and, more fundamentally, the decimation of the UN's global standing since Annan's departure in 2007.

Annan was not perfect, and his career included tragedies and mistakes. In the mid-1990s, when he was serving as the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, massacres occurred in Rwanda and, subsequently, Bosnia, because UN forces failed to fulfill their responsibility to protect. Annan took no meaningful responsibility for that failure.

Nonetheless, Annan possessed a combination of charisma, elegance, eloquence, and self-control that was decisive in maintaining the visibility and legitimacy of the primus inter pares of international organizations. None of his successors has been able to offer these vital qualities, including António Guterres, who took the helm last year. Indeed, despite Guterres's many positive attributes, the fact is that the UN has all but disappeared from the international radar screen since he took over.

The world stands on the precipice of a kind of chaos not seen since the end of World War II. Increasingly brazen attacks on multilateralism and the international rule of law threaten to destroy the postwar global system that was created - with the UN as its vital pillar - to ensure that history would not repeat itself.

Nowadays, the US has emerged as the UN's chief detractor. In President Donald Trump's view, the UN is useless

at best. After all, it stands for multilateralism and the rule of law, whereas Trump advocates bilateral deal making and the rule of force.

Russia is also challenging the UN's role, albeit to a lesser extent. This March, Russia blocked a meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss the human-rights catastrophe in Syria. But, in a sense, the Kremlin's move actually reflects the enduring perception that the UN does still have some influence.

One world power that has emerged as a somewhat surprising backer of the UN is China. Unlike Trump's US, China recognizes that the UN can serve as a platform for it to assert global influence, while building up its soft power. As a result, China has become the third-largest contributor to the UN's regular budget, and the second-largest contributor to its peacekeeping budget. China has even pledged thousands of personnel to UN peacekeeping operations, indicating a commitment to global security.

But to restore the UN's standing and influence to the level it attained under Annan will require stronger support from Europe - in particular, France and Germany - alongside at least two other influential liberal democracies, perhaps Canada to represent North America and Japan to represent Asia. Of course, critics will express their doubts. If France and Germany can barely manage any progress in the European context, how can they be expected to lead the world back toward multilateralism and the rule of law? Canada cannot expect to represent North America over the powerful US. And Japan is an aging, if not decaying, society.

But what is the alternative? If these liberal democracies - which do wield their share of soft power - remain passive, the international order will continue to weaken, potentially to the point that it is shaped primarily by brute force, rather than diplomacy, cooperation, or the rule of law.

Together, however, these countries can try to arrest the decay of international institutions and prevent the world from falling back into the systemic violence of the past. If American voters, as seems likely, take away the Republicans' majority in the House of Representatives in the midterm elections this November, the chances of saving the international order will be even higher.

A collapse into chaos is more likely today than at any point in the last 70 years. But it is not inevitable. We may not have a secretary-general with Annan's gifts, but we can and must continue to fight for the world order that he helped to build.

Dominique Moisi is Senior Counselor at the Institut Montaigne in Paris.

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice Chairman / Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net

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