

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



December 09, 2017

## Corruption Hampers Development and Security

Today, December 09, is being celebrated in different countries of the world under the theme: United Against Corruption for Development, Peace and Security. The international campaign, in this regard, is focused on corruption as one of the biggest impediments to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It highlights that corruption is a serious crime that can undermine social and economic development in all societies. No country, region or community is immune to it.

As per the statistics by United Nations (UN) every year \$1 trillion is paid in bribes while an estimated \$2.6 trillion are stolen annually through corruption – a sum equivalent to more than 5 per cent of the global GDP. In developing countries, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), funds lost to corruption are estimated at 10 times the amount of official development assistance.

These facts and figures show that corruption is one of the ugliest problems within a society.

Corruption is troublesome because it can hamper not only development but peace and security as well. Our country Afghanistan stands as a clear example. Rampant corruption in the country has hampered development work and given rise to many social evils. It has also fueled instability and supported the insurgents; particularly through drug production and smuggling. It has incapacitated Afghan institutions and made them rely on nepotism and favoritism. The skills and capacities of the talented youngsters have not been utilized and, therefore, the trust and confidence on the institutions have further receded.

Unfortunately, the government has been reluctant to take any considerable measure and resultantly this menace has kept on rising. National Unity Government (NUG), in its initial days, promised that it would play a definitive role in curbing the menace of corruption, but unfortunately, it soon forgot its promises and little has been achieved so far. Therefore, the situation has further deteriorated for the country and raised further concerns. Although the time was ripe for the leadership to carry out honest and determined efforts to tackle the social problems.

Corruption, along with insecurity and unemployment, is among the three most dominant problems in Afghanistan. Most of the people in Afghanistan face different sorts of corruption almost on daily basis. As per calculations from Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) Afghans pay more than \$3 billion dollars per year in corruption. Usage of such a large amount of money for the purposes other than development and betterment of the country does not only spoil the money, it also causes other types of issues as well, which are mostly related to illegal means. Terrorism also usurps a large portion of this money indirectly. Unfortunately, in the presence of such a scenario, it is weird to find that the political will to fight corruption does not exist and no such efforts in this regard have been made that could have a positive impact on people's lives and that is why people are dissatisfied with the government.

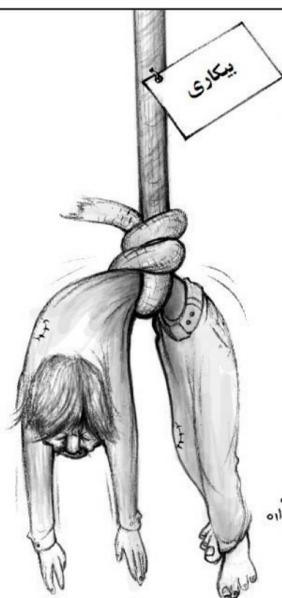
Today, corruption has penetrated deep into our social fabric. It is now a part of routine life to be corrupt. From a very minor to the most major matter, we find corruption ruling the roost.

One of the major problems in tackling with corruption in our country is that the controlling mechanism itself is involved in it. The government that should be on the forefront to curb this menace, itself has been a major contributor in this regard. There have been many major occasions of corruption when current administration has been blamed for being directly involved in the matter. On most of the occasions the government has blamed the Western supporters to be generating corruption in the country. Western allies, on the other hand, have kept on insisting that Afghan authorities must carry out serious measures to curb the overgrowing corruption; however, the outcome is yet to be produced in this regard. The Western allies have spent billions of dollars in supporting the Afghan government and people but the outcomes have not been satisfactory as they have not been very much careful in this regard. And already much of the money has been misused by corruption.

Nevertheless, in the process, the supporters of Afghanistan have lost their trust from the Afghan authorities and are mostly disappointed from what has been achieved after more than a decade of expenditure and hard work.

Corruption in Afghanistan is now a complex phenomenon that requires extensive efforts from both national and international authorities to be comprehended and resolved. Definitely, the anti-corruption institutions, equipped with authority and facilities can be major contributors in curbing it and Afghan government needs to support them appropriately.

International community and international organizations, on other hand, must also ensure that the aid that they provide through different NGO's should not be misused. There should be strong control and monitoring mechanism and it should be made sure that the aid money must reach the needy and deserving people of Afghanistan; otherwise, the aid would further deteriorate Afghan society instead of doing it any good.



## Donald Trump Versus Mideast Peace

The US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel comes in defiance of overwhelming global opposition. The message is clear: the Trump administration is determined to dictate the Israeli version of peace with the Palestinians, rather than to mediate an equitable agreement between the two sides.

By Daoud Kuttab

In a matter of three weeks, the United States government has attacked the Palestinian people on three fronts. First, on November 17, President Donald Trump's administration announced its decision (subsequently reversed) to close the Palestine Liberation Organization's diplomatic office in Washington, DC. Then, on December 5, the US Congress voted unanimously to adopt the Taylor Force Act, which blocks aid to the Palestinian Authority from 2018 to 2024, unless the PA stops paying monthly salaries and other benefits to the families of killed or convicted Palestinian militants. But it was the third attack, which came the following day, that will prove most devastating to efforts to achieve peace.

In defiance of overwhelming global opposition, not to mention past United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, Trump announced that the US will officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The message is clear: the Trump administration is determined to dictate the Israeli version of peace with the Palestinians, rather than to mediate an equitable agreement between the two sides.

Of course, that is not how Trump's administration presents it. As the New York Times reported just before the announcement, Trump administration officials believe the decision, which entails moving the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, could actually hasten the peace process, "by removing a source of ambiguity from the American position." After all, they point out, the embassy question comes up every six months, when the president has to sign a new waiver to keep the embassy in Tel Aviv – a process that, from their perspective, repeatedly stokes political tension.

In his address on the topic, Trump reiterated this argument. Officially recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, he asserted, "is a long-overdue step to advance the peace process and to work towards a lasting agreement." He also claimed that the decision "is not intended, in any way, to reflect a departure from our strong commitment to facilitate a lasting peace agreement," one "that is a great deal for the Israelis and a great deal for the Palestinians."

But, in that same speech, Trump betrayed the superiority he ascribes to Israel: "Israel is a sovereign nation with the right like every other sovereign nation to determine its own capital." Despite its best efforts, Palestine, of course, is not recognized as a sovereign state by the US. So, far from seeking a fair peace deal between the two parties, Trump has effectively declared victory for Israel – and instructed the Palestinians to accept defeat quietly.

Yet the Palestinians have displayed a profound capacity for resistance. Just last summer, when the Israeli government decided unilaterally to install metal detectors at the entrances of Al Haram Al Sharif/Al Aqsa Mosque, Palestinians demonstrated outside the mosque for two weeks, forcing the Israelis to reverse the decision. Moving the US embassy to Jerusalem

is a far more powerful symbolic move, suggesting that it could spur even more formidable resistance – and not just from the 300,000 Palestinians who live in East Jerusalem, or even from the more than 12 million Palestinians around the world. What Trump's administration fails to recognize is that Jerusalem – the third-holiest site in Islam, after Mecca and Medina – isn't just an Israeli-Palestinian issue; all of the world's 350 million Arabs and 1.5 billion Muslims have a direct and vital stake in it.

Trump may think that his current honeymoon with Saudi Arabia will allow him to escape pushback from Arab leaders. But Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is facing too much opposition to his own reforms to side openly with Israel on so emotive an issue as Jerusalem.

The fact is that leaders across the Muslim and Arab world are not going to allow Trump to hand Jerusalem to Israel unilaterally, simply to satisfy his small base of US Christian Zionist evangelicals (he received the support of less than a quarter of American Jews). And, indeed, Mohammad Shtayyeh, a member of the Fatah central committee, has already pledged that the Palestinian leadership, in coordination with Jordan and other Arab states, will resist the dictate.

Yet it is not just Arabs or Muslims who support the Palestinians' just demands for a fair peace agreement. Innumerable people worldwide – of all faiths and backgrounds, as well as resolutions by the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and the International Court of Justice – also support this stance. This is true even in the US: according to a poll released by the Arab American Institute, only 20% of Americans (including American Arabs and American Jews) favor moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The Palestinians are calling for a two-state solution, with East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state and West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The Israelis, by contrast, have consistently thwarted a two-state solution, and demanded to have Jerusalem all to themselves.

In short, it is the Israeli government's position – and that of the Trump administration – that must change, if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is ever to be resolved.

Many in Israel recognize this: 25 prominent Israelis, including former diplomats, army generals, and academics, signed a letter to Trump's Mideast peace envoy denouncing the Jerusalem decision. "The status of Jerusalem," they wrote, "lies at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and must be determined within the context of resolving that conflict."

Any viable peace deal must be able to stand the test of time. And that means it must be fair and just, rather than leaving one party seething with resentment – especially if that resentment extends to millions of people worldwide. Attempting to ram a solution down Palestinians' throats will increase the likelihood of even more violence, not peace. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Daoud Kuttab, a former professor at Princeton University and the founder and former director of the Institute of Modern Media at Al-Quds University in Ramallah, is a leading activist for media freedom in the Middle East.

## Europe's Chance to Lead on Robotics and AI

By Guy Verhofstadt

At least since Mary Shelley created Victor Frankenstein and his iconic monster in 1818, humans have had a morbid fascination with man-made beings that could threaten our existence. From the American television adaptation of "Westworld," which depicts an amusement park populated by androids, to the "Terminator" films, in which super-intelligent machines aim to destroy mankind, we often indulge the paranoid fantasy that our own technological creations might turn on us.

In Homo Deus, Hebrew University's Yuval Noah Harari argues that existing technological advances have already put mankind on a path toward its own demise. Developments in artificial intelligence (AI), algorithms that make better decisions than humans, and genetic engineering all imply that most human beings will be superfluous in the not-too-distant future.

At the Web Summit conference in Lisbon last month, the renowned physicist Stephen Hawking addressed the threats as well as the opportunities that lie ahead. "Success in creating effective AI," Hawking said, "could be the biggest event in the history of our civilization. Or the worst." The problem, he added, is that, "We just don't know. So we cannot know if we will be infinitely helped by AI, or ignored by it and sidelined, or conceivably destroyed by it."

Despite their stark warnings about the possible implications of existing technologies, however, both Hawking and Harari believe that we still have time to shape the future for ourselves. The changes ahead will raise a number of pertinent questions for policymakers. What will the spread of robotics and AI mean for defense and security or the future of employment? And what rules can ensure that these innovations are collectively beneficial?

So far, mainstream political debate about these questions has been limited. That is not surprising: as we saw with animal cloning, politics tends to lag behind science. In the European Union, single-market regulations are often adopted years after the scientific breakthroughs that made them necessary. But when it comes to robotics and AI, we cannot afford to hesitate. Fortunately, as Hawking pointed out, some European policymakers have already begun legislative work on this front. In February of this year, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of new rules governing AI and robotics. We are asking the European Commission to propose measures that will maximize the economic benefits of

these technologies, while also guaranteeing a standard level of safety and security. Although I disagree with some of the proposals currently on offer, the fact that we are at least having a debate on the matter is a positive development.

While other countries are also considering new rules for robots and AI, the EU has a unique opportunity to take the lead. By acting now, we can ensure that the EU will not be forced to follow regulatory frameworks set by other countries. Ultimately, global rules will be required; and Europe has a chance to set the standard for what they should look like.

For starters, we will soon need a specific legal status for robots, so that we can determine who is liable for any damage they may cause. Moreover, as the Microsoft founder and philanthropist Bill Gates has warned, robotics and advanced algorithms will likely eliminate many jobs. In fact, the World Economic Forum estimates that five million jobs across 15 developed countries will be lost to automation by 2020.

Given that ongoing changes in the means of production have already kick-started this trend, Gates and some in the European Parliament have suggested that robots be taxed to pay for human services. Whether that is the best solution is now the topic of much debate; but, clearly, some kind of compromise will need to be made.

Robotics and AI will also raise profound ethical issues for liberal politicians, particularly with respect to privacy and safety. Fortunately, there is a broader political consensus on this issue than on taxation. The European Parliament has proposed a voluntary code of conduct for engineers and others working in the field of robotics. Ethical as well as legal standards are needed to ensure that robots and related technologies are designed with respect for human dignity in mind.

Lastly, the European Parliament has called on the European Commission to consider creating a new EU-level agency for robotics and AI, to provide public officials with technical, ethical, and regulatory expertise. To my mind, this would be a sensible step forward, given that an estimated 30% of the world's leading companies will employ a chief robotics officer by 2019.

We can be almost certain that today's technological advances will have a profound effect on our lives and livelihoods, akin to a new Industrial Revolution. By establishing regulations and standards now, the EU can ensure that all Europeans will benefit from the coming changes, rather than be engulfed by chaos. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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