

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



December 25, 2018

## Elections in Democracy Ensure Political and Economic Stability

Democracy is considered as the best system of government by many of the states around the world; particularly, by the states that are developed and that have achieved political and economic stability. Therefore, it is imperative that this system of government must be pursued by Afghanistan as well, if it really wants to achieve stability and sustainability. In that pursuit, it must also ensure that different attributes of a democratic system are also taken care of.

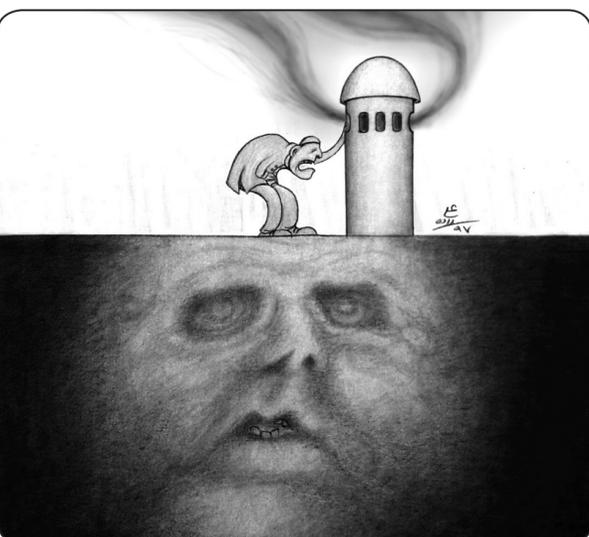
One of the most dominating attributes of democracy is the process of election. If elections continue democracy prospers. This claim can be strengthened by the evidences that lie in the history of greatest democratic states. American democratic history depicts a serious of elections, continued for more than two centuries. United Kingdom's history depicts even a longer continuation of series of elections and today both the countries enjoy a dominant role in International Political scenario. They both enjoy economic and political might and there are many countries that have been trying to adopt their systems so as to have justice and order in their systems. They are no doubt among the leading countries, with prosperity licking their hands as faithful and invincibility guarding their gates.

In true sense, elections let the public govern themselves; therefore, in a democratic state government is not anything beyond the General Will. People get the chance of listening the motives and mottos of the leaders and they get time even to analyze them properly. Afterward, they are given chance of casting their votes and choosing the leaders whom they consider capable enough to govern them. It is possible that the leaders who are chosen to form government may not be the best, but they are better than the ones who are not chosen by the will of the majority as every nation in the world have the right to choose what they think better for themselves, without bringing harm to others.

However, there are certain thinkers who believe that even though the elections continue the miseries of the people continue as there is no any change in their lives as a result of the elections. They argue that though the elections change faces of the rulers but do not change the lives of the common people who are being ruled. They basically relate to standard of living of the common people and their access to justice and rights and claim that though elections continue, miseries prevail. However, it would be self contradictory statement to say that elections continue and miseries prevail because elections can provide opportunities to the people to choose the sort of government that they like for themselves. In reality miseries prevail because elections do not continue. It would be better to explain it in a simpler manner. In fact, every new election is a new step in the evolution of democracy and every new step is better than the earlier one. That's why we call it evolution. No matter, if the government after new election is corrupt. It is always better than the earlier one as the election before the earlier one had also contributed a little in the awareness enhancement, so will do this new one and the election after this one would have better decisions. People will have a chance to see what the chosen government has been able to offer to them. They can have the chance of not casting their votes to one who have not been able to serve them properly. So now, it would be wise to conclude that when elections continue miseries diminish, awareness enhances, democracy evolves and prosperity reigns.

It would be better to discuss the statement in context of Afghanistan. Recently, there have been different sorts of discussions regarding the upcoming elections in Afghanistan and continuously there have been discussions regarding the democratic system in Afghanistan and its outcomes so far. There are intellectuals who basically believe that democracy will not be able to lead Afghan political system and they even argue that Afghan society is not so far ready for it. But, it would be better to be more logical and scientific. The history of democracy in Afghanistan is very short and before blaming democracy for the miseries in our country, it would be better to ask ourselves, "Has there been democracy in real sense in Afghanistan?" Never! So, when there has never been democracy and elections have a very short history then how can we blame democracy for miseries?

In order to have a fruitful tree of democracy, we need to water it continuously with elections, safeguard it from the parasites of corruption, fertilize it with freedom of expression and above all avoid deforestation by dominancy of dictatorship. Only then we would be able to have true democracy and would be able to stand strong against political and economic challenges.



## China Paving the Way for Peace and Development in The Region

By: Muhammad Zamir Assadi

The second trilateral meeting between China, Pakistan and Afghanistan has reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening their relations, deepening cooperation and advancing connectivity under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) and other regional economic initiatives.

The framework of cooperation was established one year ago with help from China and the countries agreed to jointly continue their efforts in three areas of trilateral cooperation - political mutual trust and support reconciliation, development cooperation and connectivity as well as security cooperation and counter-terrorism.

The efforts of China show that it is committed to peace and development in the region. It upholds the principle of amity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness in its diplomacy, seeks friendship and partnership with its neighbors and is working to build a peaceful and prosperous region.

The trilateral session has also helped both Pakistan and Afghanistan reduce the trust deficit created in the past year and understand the needs of security and development, which are essential for future stability and growth. A consensus has been formed among the three countries that dialogue and cooperation will be pushed forward to enhance strategic mutual trust with the view to promote the security of all countries in the region. The countries also realize that disputes should be settled through peaceful means by the countries in the region and without the interference of other countries.

To pursue sustainable security, the three countries will work hard to improve people's lives, narrow the wealth gap, promote common development and create lasting security by addressing both the symptoms and root causes of the problems.

China has stepped up to work with all the countries in the region to explore new partnerships and alliances under the framework of the BRI, which will undoubtedly have immense dividends for regional and global peace and prosperity.

Afghanistan's peace has a direct impact on the region's

stability and prosperity and in this regard, China and Pakistan have been enhancing their cooperation to promote the reconciliation process and build a peaceful region.

With the success of the first phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that has emerged as the flagship project of the BRI, economic links have received new impetus. This might well prove to be beneficial to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan will certainly need to explore ways to get benefits from the CPEC, which has become a symbol of recognition of development for the South Asian region. Moreover, the CPEC will provide an opportunity for Afghanistan to develop its economy and integrate it with the larger region.

The development process under the BRI and CPEC in Afghanistan will also help eliminate terrorism and generate employment opportunities in the country for unemployed youth.

The development of both export-driven and domestic consumption-driven industries should also be a major goal for Afghanistan and, in addition, integration with the CPEC should be a major part of that goal.

Afghanistan's strategic efforts to develop and modernize its industrial base should, therefore, include CPEC.

Afghanistan has substantial trade volume with China, most of which is in the form of imports. Given the increasing competitiveness of Chinese goods, it is likely that Afghanistan's import trade with China will grow.

In this case, the CPEC has emerged as an alternate route for Afghanistan to trade with China through Pakistan and these states have a shared interest in stabilizing Kabul.

By becoming a part of the CPEC, and the BRI in general, Afghanistan will have the opportunity to stabilize its economy by enhancing its trade opportunities. It will also be in a good position to reap the benefits from the industrialization of Pakistan under the CPEC.

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## A Business Model for Sustainability

By: Paul Polman

In a recent report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that without "rapid and far-reaching" changes to how land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities are managed, the damage to our planet could be irreversible. The message was clear: we need a cooperative effort on a global scale to change our current trajectory. And, given that many of the toughest sustainability challenges the world faces are linked to how it does business, the only prudent way forward is to change how business is done.

This may sound daunting, but we already have a framework to guide the transition: the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, adopted in September 2015 by 193 countries, are designed to achieve a "more sustainable future for all" by 2030, which, by extension, will enable a better business environment. The Business and Sustainable Development Commission has estimated that meeting the SDGs could add some \$12 trillion and 380 million jobs to the global economy by the end of the next decade.

With so much to gain - and to lose from inaction - the private sector is beginning to focus on the connection between profits and sustainability. According to the Ethical Corporation's latest Responsible Business Trends report, 69% of business executives surveyed said they are integrating SDGs into their strategies. At the same time, the number of companies receiving B Corp Certification - which measures a firm's social and environmental performance - has increased in recent years.

Global finance is also inching toward sustainability. For example, environmental, social, and governance assets under management are estimated to be as high as \$22 trillion dollars; \$82 trillion is committed to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment; \$32 trillion is pegged to carbon pricing; and even the market for "green bonds" is growing exponentially. This momentum matters because financial market support will be essential in achieving the sustainable development agenda.

And yet, to sustain this progress, businesses must recognize that even in a global value chain, it is impossible to outsource corporate responsibility. On the contrary, multinational corporations must use their market power to drive social change. Consider my company, Unilever: 2.5 billion times every day, someone somewhere uses one of our products distributed via a supply chain that includes more than 80,000 suppliers and nearly two million farmers, who in turn support communities of millions of people. Such scale enables Unilever to contribute to and benefit from the SDGs, which is precisely what we try to do.

In 2009, we introduced the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan, a blueprint to bolster our social, environmental, and economic performance. Goals include strengthening the health and wellbeing of over a billion people; reducing the environmental footprint associated with the production and use of our products; and enhancing the livelihoods of millions of workers. This approach has allowed us to be more strategic in identifying the challenges and opportunities that our business faces.

By using our resources and brands, we have also addressed key development challenges like poor nutrition, sanitation, and hygiene; climate change and deforestation; human rights; skills training; and workplace equality. And we have done all of this with nearly a 300% return over ten years and a 19% return on equity, demonstrating that it is possible to employ a development-focused agenda that delivers for shareholders and stakeholders.

I am not suggesting that success has come easily, or that our job is finished. Although I will be retiring from Unilever at the end of 2018, I am confident that the company I have led for more than a decade will continue to improve business processes with an eye toward strengthening sustainability.

The key to addressing the world's social and environmental challenges is using the power of markets and building coalitions to improve effectiveness. The final SDG, Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17), recognizes this and urges business leaders to cooperate with governments and civil society to deliver on sustainable-development objectives. A good example of SDG 17 in action is the Food and Land Use Coalition, a global network of business executives, scientists, policymakers, investors, and farmers that is working to transform the world's fragmented and complex food systems. One key area of focus for this coalition is the disconnect between production and consumption.

We need more of this; the future of the global economy is no longer dependent on whether we act, but on how long we take to do so. Despite some progress on the SDGs over the past three years, we are not moving fast enough. As Winston Churchill once said: "I never worry about action, only inaction." That wisdom should shape our approach to business and the SDGs today. The world we want for our children will arrive only when we choose action over indifference, courage over comfort, and solidarity over division.

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