

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



February 01, 2016

## Institutionalizing Anti-corruption Efforts

Afghanistan is once again ranked among top three most corrupt countries in the world. According to the International Transparency annual report on corruption, only Somalia and North Korea precede Afghanistan as the most corrupt nations of the world. Based on the report, five countries ranking lowest in the index are considered as the most insecure countries in the world. The report says that in Afghanistan, millions of dollars that must have been spent for reconstruction of the country, has been embezzled or wasted, and this has severely affected the efforts to maintain peace and order in the country. Based on the report, corruption has increased in Afghanistan since the takeover of the national unity government in the country. The International Transparency report seriously questions the efforts of the Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) to fight corruption and embezzlement.

Fighting corruption was one of the key promises of the NUG leaders during their presidential election campaigns in 2013. When taking power, NUG committed itself to seriously fight corruption and embezzlement in the country. However, despite some drastic measures taken by the government in last two years, the campaign has been struggling to make any tangible progress in eliminating corruption and promoting transparent and sound governance in Afghanistan.

The report suggests that the endeavors led by NUG have not been able to reverse the trend of increasing corruption in Afghanistan rather the level of corruption has further increased. This is while the NUG is credited for taking some critical steps in dealing with some high-profile and notorious cases of corruption in Afghanistan. Shortly after taking over power, President Ashraf Ghani quickly moved to resolve the Kabul Bank financial scandal. In order to curb rampant embezzlement in government ministries, he also consolidated major government contracts and procurements with oversight of a high procurement committee under his direct watch. His unexpected moves in suspending and charging some high-ranking officials of government procurement offices sent a shockwave within the ministries. The failure of the anti-corruption campaign of the National Unity Government is coming as surprising for those who expected the anti-corruption policies of the government would reduce level of corruption in Afghanistan.

There are some key reasons for the failure of the policies of the government in fighting corruption and embezzlement in the government offices. The Afghan policy makers need to take into account these factors. The most notable reason for the failure of the anti-corruption efforts is lack of institutionalized fight against corruption. No individual would ever be able to curb the pervasive corruption in the public sector and government offices in Afghanistan by taking isolated and arbitrary measures. The government needs to pursue a fully-fledged and institutionalized campaign against corruption in all levels. Only systemic and sustainable efforts would be able to reduce corruption and embezzlement in the country.

The government needs to heed to the call of the report and start establishing comprehensive mechanisms for dealing with corruption in a sustainable and viable manner. The government could establish a devoted and corruption-free entity for pursuing and exposing corrupt officials and consider rewards for those exposing corrupt officials. Any system for anti-corruption campaign should be able to institutionalize anti-corruption efforts in the government offices. Only such an approach would be able to purge the government bureaucracy from corrupt officials. In order to eliminate corruption, the Afghan government needs to redouble efforts to enhance capacities of the courts dealing with corruption cases. The Afghan judiciary must be enabled to undertake a more active role in pursuing and punishing corrupt government officials. There should be zero tolerance from both the relevant government agencies and the judiciary to corruption. Current there is high levels of leniency and negligence from the relevant authorities towards instances of bribes in the public and government offices. This is because most of the officials of the anti-corruption offices are themselves corrupt or are lenient to cases of corruption due to the pervasiveness of bribes and embezzlements in Afghanistan. The government needs to establish and task a committed to fight corruption. There are rich experiments of anti-corruption efforts within the international community. The Afghan government needs to adopt suitable but robust and sustainable approach for fighting corruption in Afghanistan. The government's focus on other major national issues such as the anti-insurgency campaign and the peace efforts should not derail the efforts for cutting corruption in Afghanistan. The pervasive corruption undermines the whole efforts for promoting good governance in Afghanistan. The international community has spent millions of dollars to eliminate corruption and promote good governance in Afghanistan. However, the efforts have failed to make tangible differences in curbing the ever-increasing corruption in the country. The national unity government needs to take action to salvage the lagging process of promoting good governance in the country. The report of the Transparency International should come as a waking call for the government of Afghanistan to correct its course over fighting corruption or its leadership of the campaign will be another failed endeavor.



## Egoistic or Altruistic Suicide?

By Hujjatullah Zia

The graph of committing suicide is on rise amongst our younger generation including male and female. There is no doubt that social facts are the factors which pressurize them mentally that may lead to suicide. However, what remains controversial among sociologists is that what is the root cause of social facts? The viewpoint of Karl Marx, a German philosopher, is based on materialist conception of history. According to this viewpoint, social changes are not based on mentalities and [cultural] values rather they are based on economic factors. On the other hand, Max Weber, a German sociologist, does not approve of economy's vital role. He believes that rather than economic factors; the minds, mentalities, beliefs and cultural values of a society involve vastly in one's personal actions and as well as in social facts. If we study about the factors of suicide in our society, both the ideas come true. Even though, committing suicide seems a personal action, however, when it is generally committed, it changes to a social phenomenon.

Emile Durkheim, a famous French sociologist, analyzes suicide sociologically. Apparently, committing suicide is a personal issue which originates in intense despair and haplessness, however, Durkheim confirms that social factors play a vital role in the realm of suicide. By sociological study of social facts, and considering the official reports and documents regarding suicide in France, he discovered that men commit more suicide than women, Protestants more than Catholics, rich more than poor, bachelor more than married. He also discovered that the graph of suicide goes lower during war and higher during economic changes or instabilities.

Durkheim discovers three types of suicide. First, egoistic suicide which happens when one feels lonely and solitary or whose social ties are on the wane or broken. For example, the lower rate of suicide among Catholics was the cause of their strong social ties, whereas the personal and moral freedom of Protestants was praying to God individually. Likewise, marrying through joining one in a stable social tie was a setback against suicide, whereas singles are mostly exposed to isolation and loneliness. According to him, the lower rate of committing suicide during the war is the cause of social solidarity.

Second type is altruistic suicide, which happens when one's social tie reaches to excess and giving more value to society rather than him/her. Japanese Kamikaze pilots or Islamic selfless operations are the examples.

This type of suicide happens mostly in traditional societies where mechanical solidarity exists. Moreover the third type is fatalistic suicide which is the most insignificant one and it is out of our discussion.

If we consider the cause and effects of suicide going on amongst our younger generation by one reason or another, all of them may fall in the first type which is egoistic suicide. Many factors and social facts (the aspects of social life such as economic situation or religious effects which shape our attitudes) marginalize them and ultimately lead them to suicide. They commit suicide

for failing to gain their personal advantages rather than selfless or altruistic acts. Nowadays, egoistic desires and ambitions are to their acme, whereas altruism is practiced only in words and hardly exist in real world.

Religious effects also depend on social facts which shape our attitudes in the society. I believe that religious codes play the most crucial role in our social life. One who is naked of religious laws which originate in moral values, mostly resorts to committing suicide whenever face to despair and despondency. Of course, when one's spiritual needs are not satiated, s/he has to feed her/his spirit voraciously so as to be soled by any means, ultimately the dire thirst and hunger will lead them to suicide.

Secondly, the vital role of economic situation, which depends on social facts as well, is also undeniable. Besides spiritual needs, one is also in dire need of physical wants. Whenever one is pressurized seriously by economic situation, s/he will be marginalized by facing despair and disappointment. Hence, in the frenzy of anger, they will think of no other solution other than committing suicide. These both above mentioned suicides fall in egoistic type.

There are also many more factors such as domestic violence and love failure. Apparently, these two actions seem personal matters rather than social facts, but the truth is this that if personal actions are done by many people than it will take the shape of social facts. Moreover, the issue of love failure which leads to suicide seems a bit controversial that whether it falls in egoistic or altruistic type of suicide. Even though, the lovers claim to commit suicide altruistically, nonetheless, the action is a certain egoistic matter. In other words, those who fall in love and fail in it, commit suicide apparently for the sake of their beloved, however, the reality is that they resort to suicide for failing to join their beloved for their own advantages which is no more than self or egoistic wants.

Undeniably, committing suicide amongst our younger generation is politicized greatly, albeit no action is taken against this sad phenomenon yet.

Government can allay the anxieties of our youths by bringing effectual changes in economic system. In other words, if economic pressures are alleviated in people's life, the graph of suicide will fall to a lower level. No doubt, Afghan people are badly in grip of poverty and destitution.

Of course, poverty and destitution do not give birth only to suicide but to many more crime and corruption across the country. It is crystal clear that moral corruptions originate in economic restrictions and many criminals are forced to illegal actions by poverty. It is believed that the more poverty exists in a society the more crime is committed there. Hence, besides decreasing the level of suicide, government can prevent other social crimes by alleviating economic pressures. Hence, economic challenges are great menace to the society to be dealt with as soon as possible.

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## The Angry Quarter

By Carl Bildt

Something seems to have gone wrong with politics in the West. In the United States, the billionaire tycoon and reality-TV star Donald Trump seems set to win the Republican Party's presidential nomination. And throughout Europe, populism in one guise or another is running rampant.

We are witnessing the emergence of what I call the "Angry Quarter." In the rich part of the world, roughly a quarter of the electorate seems to be furious, disillusioned, and divorced from mainstream political parties and allegiances. Part of this angry-voter phenomenon can be attributed to local or temporary factors: Politics is always and everywhere a volatile business at times. But it is also the result of long-term trends that are transforming political systems in the West.

Over the last few decades, we have seen the decline and then collapse of the epic narratives around which European political structures were constructed. From the publication of The Communist Manifesto in 1848 until the fall of the Soviet empire, significant parts of the continent's electorates were inspired and mobilized by a vision of socialism.

At the height of the Industrial Age, the epoch of mass production was reflected in a politics that revolved around the mass organizations of society. Collectivism, not individualism, was the contemporary creed, and the nation-state was its solid foundation.

Today, everything is changing – and rapidly. The socialist dream has been relegated to the dustbin of history. Globalization is transforming societies, and a growing middle class is becoming the backbone of societies that are just one or two generations removed from extreme poverty. Add migration and the new social media landscape, and it is hardly surprising that a significant share of the Western population feels that society has lost its bearings.

When members of society who believed they were on the winning side of history come to fear that they are among the losers, the result is a radical shift in politics. Throughout Europe, the large center-left parties that once regularly reaped 40% or more of the popular vote are losing ground, often barely breaching 20%.

Just as the democratic left had its epic narrative, so did the democratic right. And, because it was often organized in opposition to socialism, the conservative narrative, too, has lost much of its luster – though conservatism has been

able to adapt by repositioning itself as a credible force for managing tough economic times.

These great shifts have been underway for decades, but inertia has until recently blunted their impact, as older generations retained old allegiances. Those participating politically for the first time, however, are more ready to embrace the new. With the blurring of the old battle lines, politics is gradually being reshaped into a contest between advocates of open, globalized societies and defenders of inward-looking tribalism.

Tribalism has strong appeal in periods of rapid, tumultuous change, as what the political philosopher Karl Popper called the "the strain of civilization" exerts its pressures on society. The issue of immigration is a particularly potent one: the mythical tribe suddenly under attack by invading hordes from afar. And its impact can be seen everywhere today. A wall must be built against Mexico. The United Kingdom must restore control of its borders. Germany must slam shut its doors. Society must close, and quickly – the barbarians are coming.

These sentiments are not new, but in the past they could be managed by the large political forces built around the epic narratives of the left and right. As those narratives have lost their power, the political field has been blown wide open. The Angry Quarter is set to organize around populist ideas and follow those who question the very nature of our open societies.

This challenge is here to stay. Trump might fade. French National Front leader Marine Le Pen may not become President. In Italy, the Five Star Movement, led by the comedian Beppe Grillo, may never crystallize into a viable political party. But, until new narratives replace the old ones, the epochal shift in politics will simply bring forth other leaders who play on the same anger and fears.

Defenders of open societies must rally support for their ideas, uphold the values of the West, and prevent the preachers of populism from expanding the Angry Quarter. Doing so will be a difficult balancing act, because it will require addressing the very real fears and unease produced by the rapid changes rippling across the world. It is not difficult to understand the widening appeal of tribalism; that appeal makes it all the more important to make the case for openness. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Carl Bildt was Sweden's foreign minister from 2006 to October 2014 and prime minister from 1991 to 1994, when he negotiated his country's EU accession.

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