

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

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From No Governance to Good Governance

Afghanistan is standing at a crucial juncture of its history. It is looking at the vistas of peace opportunities; however, to achieve them successfully, it has to make true efforts. Most importantly, Afghan government must stand strong and take initiatives that are worthwhile.

Nevertheless, there have been controversies regarding Afghan government and its capacity to deal with the challenges within the country. In fact, it has been observed that Afghan government has not been able to provide rudimentary requirements of life to majority of its people and have not been able to seek appropriate solution to various political problems that influence the system to a great extent. There has been a label of corruption and many, both in national and international circles, do not believe that it has the potential to achieve 'good governance'.

The capacity of good governance is judged by its potential to offer the basic requirements of life to the people easily and readily. Moreover, it must strive to raise the standard of living of the masses. There are certain important characteristics that must be achieved so as to establish it. Good governance has to be participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law.

Good governance strives that there should be participation of all the important groups of the society within the decision-making process and must involve both men and women. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. It is important to point out that representative democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable in society would be taken into consideration in decision making. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand. Unfortunately, in our country Afghanistan the decision making is not carried out through proper participation of the representatives of the people. In fact, the decision-making process is very much centralized.

An important characteristic of good governance is that it is consensus oriented. There are several actors and different opinions in a given society. Good governance requires mediation of the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole community and how this can be achieved. It also requires a broad and long-term perspective on what is needed for sustainable human development and how to achieve the goals of such development. This can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural and social contexts of a given society or community. Afghan government has not been able to develop a strong consensus and the ruling class does not seem much bothered about any sort of consensus.

Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders.

Afghan government, on the other hand, has been formed in such a way that it is difficult to hold the Presidential Office accountable for its policies and actions. It can do whatever it wants without standing accountable to its people. As a matter of fact, accountability can be achieved when there is transparency and the rule of law. However, both these characteristics seem to be non-existent in Afghan society. Transparency and rule of law can be maintained when there is proper separation of power and the different organs of state can function on their own - independently.

In fact, judiciary and law enforcement agencies must be capable to hold the law as the top priority matter. In Afghan political system the separation of powers is not clear and the judiciary is composed of what the Presidential Office decides. Moreover, the powerful and the rich are mostly considered above the law and the poor and weak have to go through the 'quagmire of law and order system'.

Good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe. It means that it should be responsive. In the same way it should also ensure equity and inclusiveness. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunities to improve or maintain their well being but what Afghan government has to offer us is the negligence of the most vulnerable. The minority groups in fact suffer from lack of proper participation in decision making and they find their existence threatened within the society. Good governance also means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of environment.

It is correct that all the characteristics mentioned above can not be achieved by a government or a society as they portray what an ideal governance must hold, but it is also true that there are many nations in the world that, to a satisfying extent, have achieved most of them. Therefore, Afghan government has to strive to achieve these characteristics if it really wants to achieve 'good governance' and wants to serve its people in a better way.

Saudi's Engagement in Human Rights Violations Raises no Eyebrows

By: Hujjatullah Zia

The death of Jamal Khashoggi, a columnist for The Washington Post, at the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul on 2 October 2018 dealt a strong blow to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who was initially touted for supporting anti-corruption and pro-women reforms.

The global attention was shifted from economic and social reforms of MBS, which was intended to mask the true face of Riyadh, to human rights issues. "Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's 'reform campaign' has been a frenzy of fear for genuine Saudi reformers who dare to advocate publicly for human rights or women's empowerment," Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, is cited as saying.

Khashoggi's death and crackdown on human rights activists sent a clear message to Saudi's dissidents that anyone opining against the rights agenda of MBS will suffer the same fate.

When Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau urged Saudi to release activists and improve human rights, Riyadh expelled the Canadian ambassador and ordered all Saudi students based in Canada to return.

Regarding Khashoggi's case, the Saudi Kingdom initially denied his death inside the consulate, claiming he had left the consulate alive, but admitted on 20 October that Khashoggi was killed inside the consulate.

Subsequently, the CIA came to the conclusion that MBS ordered Khashoggi's assassination, based on reports released by The Washington Post and other media outlets on November 16.

Above all, the military operations of Saudi-led coalition forces on Yemen have led to heavy casualties and humanitarian crisis. According to reports, 8,670-13,600 people were killed in Yemen from March 2015 to December 2017.

Last year, the United Nations warned that 13 million Yemeni civilians faced starvation, which it described "the worst famine in the world in 100 years". The death of thousands of people from starvation and cholera epidemic in 2017 sent shockwaves throughout the world.

The Saudi-led coalition forces carried out indiscriminate attacks. As a result, Riyadh dropped a 227kg laser-guided bomb, as CNN reported, on a school bus on 9 August 2018, which killed 51 people, including 40 school children. Subsequently, the Human Rights Watch called for an end to all weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, which carried out attacks on weddings, funerals, hospitals, and schools. Denmark, Norway, and Germany suspended arms exports to Saudi Arabia in the wake of troubling human rights record, mainly the gruesome death of Khashoggi, and bloody war against the Houthis in Yemen.

It has been reported this month that the weapons Trump administration sold to Riyadh were ended up in the hands of al-Qaeda-affiliated fighters in Yemen, a worrying issue "that may have even contributed to the EU's decision to place Saudi Arabia on its blacklist".

To take the aforementioned issues into consideration, the world should not turn a blind eye to Khashoggi's grisly murder inside the Saudi consulate. The international community should probe the issue thoroughly and prosecute the perpetrators fairly. If Riyadh denies the involvement of Saudi officials into the Khashoggi's death, it has to facilitate the investigation.

Meanwhile, the flagrant violation of humanitarian law in Yemen by Riyadh is a great cause for concern. It is evident that targeting public places such as schools, hospitals, residential areas and killing civilians, especially women and children, are considered war crime. Warring sides are also not allowed to block humanitarian aid. Inflicting sufferings upon civilians to pressure the opponents is against the international law. Thus, Saudi has to stop blocking humanitarian aid and has to observe the international humanitarian law (IHL).

Cracking down on human rights activists and arresting men and women in light of their social activities are also against the international instruments. It is disappointing to see the world, mainly Islamic societies, hardly ever raise eyebrow against the flagrant violation of human rights committed by the repressive kingdom.

Handing over the weapons to terrorist networks will deteriorate the security situation in the Middle East and jeopardize the entire region. Saudi must not be allowed to arm the al-Qaeda-linked groups simply to gain the upper hand over its political opponents in the region. Saudi's arm sellers, which claim to be concerned about the violation of human rights and IHL, have to stop selling weapons to this country. It will outrage the public conscience to see countries, which claim to support democracy and human rights, pursue their financial interests at the cost of the death of thousands of men, women, and children through selling weapons to Riyadh.

The severe malnourishment of Yemeni children and the cold-blooded death of civilians on daily basis in Yemen are highly shocking. The international community has to put pressure on Riyadh and impose sanctions, if necessary, to restrict the human rights violations. The Trump administration is highly responsible to show reaction towards Saudi in terms of such violations of human rights, including the Khashoggi's death. It is hoped that Saudi no more violates human rights and humanitarian law with impunity.

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The Dialectic of Global Trade Policy

By: Mohamed A. El-Erian

There is a subtle yet important change occurring in how political leaders think about international trade, including how to remedy long-standing problems. It results from a key distinction between the "what" of trade (where there is relatively broad-based agreement among countries) and the "how" (where differences have tended to undermine important relationships, whether transatlantic or between China and the world's advanced countries). As a result, there is some room for greater optimism than is suggested by talk of damaging trade wars, stifling investment restrictions, technological conflicts, and multiplying great-power tensions. The relatively wide agreement in the international trade area tends to focus on four main hypotheses that are supported by a body of research and evidence:

First, free and fair trade is in the interest of most people in most countries, but it is not sufficient for inclusive prosperity. Specific segments of society can be displaced, marginalized, and alienated. As such, trade is not just an economic issue. It also entails important institutional, political, and social dimensions.

Second, trade is inherently underpinned by a mutually beneficial set of voluntary interactions that are best conducted, to use the language of game theory, as a cooperative game.

Third, an accumulation of legitimate grievances undermines both the ideal and reality of free and fair trade. These grievances relate mostly to what economists call non-tariff barriers, including issues such as intellectual property theft, the weaponization of economic and development tools, forced technology transfer, insufficiently effective and credible multilateral institutions, and a less-than-stable global economic and financial order.

Lastly, fixing these problems has proven frustratingly slow. That is where the major areas of disagreement begin. How should the accumulating set of problems that undermine free and fair trade be addressed?

Over the years, conventional wisdom has stressed that the best option is to maintain an approach focused on cooperative resolution. This implies negotiations that are best conducted free of actual or threatened punishment such as tariff imposition, and it favors reliance on the rules-based framework established by existing multilateral institutions.

The other approach is that adopted by the US President Donald Trump's administration. Noting that past efforts to reverse the growth of non-tariff barriers have not worked and will not work, this strategy is more open to the use of tariff penalties to influence behavior modification, and the threat of escalation in response to any and all retaliation by trading partners.

First widely dismissed as an unfortunate policy pivot, more people now are beginning to wonder whether the new US approach - provided it's not used repeatedly - could in fact serve as a beneficial

disruption that helps reset international trade relationships and place them on a firmer footing. It's a view that is underpinned by evidence (the shift from retaliation to resolution by such countries as Canada, South Korea, and Mexico) and the prospect that, due to its limited options, China will have no choice but to do the same by addressing some of its non-tariff barriers.

The task for the international community is to take advantage of the emerging window to move more comprehensively on implementing measures to counter slowing growth, reduce the risk of financial instability, and ensure more inclusive prosperity. Such measures are less a problem of engineering (in the sense that most economists agree on what's needed) than of politics (the need for decisive leadership and sustainability).

For starters, domestic pro-growth policies must be re-energized, both as an urgent standalone priority and to take pressure off trade. This is particularly important for China and countries in Europe, including six of the EU's largest economies. The focus must be on productivity enhancement, structural changes to respond better to the realities of the global economy of today and tomorrow, more effective safety nets for the most vulnerable and displaced segments of society, and addressing market and government failures that frustrate growth and investment.

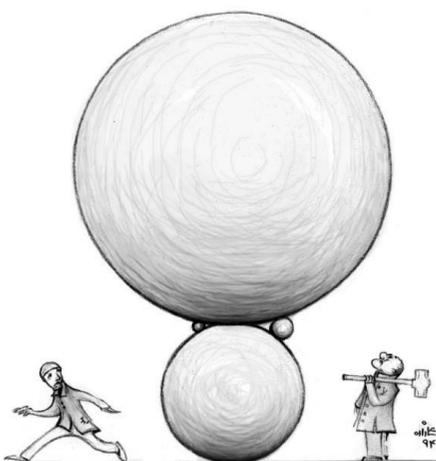
Moreover, existing trade arrangements need to be modernized, not only to fix existing problems, but also as part of a broader effort to enhance these arrangements' agility in the face of rapid technological change. Particular attention needs to be devoted to improving the approach to big data, technology transfer, digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, networks, and mobility.

It will be no less crucial to continue reforming the multilateral institutions in order to enhance their effectiveness and credibility.

Finally, the international community must guard against regional arrangements, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative, which are intended to promote development but can end up undermining partner countries. This requires steps to enhance transparency on the terms and conditions of projects and debt undertaken through such initiatives, encourage greater reliance on local labor, and ensure that recipient countries are not encumbered with excessive liabilities. Excessively one-sided debt-for-physical-assets swaps, which can also raise genuine national security concerns, must also be resisted.

It is often said that with risk comes opportunity. What initially was viewed as an unfortunate US shift to protectionism may in fact have opened a window to improve the functioning of the global economy and world trade. The next few months will be critical.

Mohamed A. El-Erian, Chief Economic Adviser at Allianz, was Chairman of US President Barack Obama's Global Development Council. He is the author, most recently, of *The Only Game in Town: Central Banks, Instability, and Avoiding the Next Collapse*.



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