

February 27, 2019

Facing the Current Challenges Appropriately

It is widely believed concept that the nations that go through difficult times ultimately gain a sense of admiration for peace, tranquility and progress and the members of such nation become more responsible and strive to bring about positive changes. History favors this concept evidently. For example, it took European centuries to rise for development and reforms and ultimately become better nations of the world. The had to go through dark age and then many wars before they started realizing that wars would not lead them towards stability, therefore, they brought about important changes in their considerations and priorities.

Nevertheless, it is vital to understand that it is not the difficulties and troubles alone that would guarantee a better response by the nation; the nature of the response itself is also of great importance. If a nation faces troubles and issues and gets pessimistic, it would not rise to the occasion and rather succumb to it. It would then be dominated by those troubles and a time could come that nation would consider all the troubles as its destiny and thus adjust itself with them. At that point all the doors towards reforms and development would be closed.

As a matter of fact, there are opportunities hidden in the troubles and problems. They show that there are shortcomings that have to be overcome by the society members. They require change and thus demand appropriate actions. Looking at the troubles in that perspective could give a nation an impetus to change and improve their socio-political circumstances.

One of the most imperative characteristics of a nation is its attitude and behavior within a tense and challenging situation. The nations that are able to go through such situations successfully, in fact, deserve to be remembered by history, while the ones that lose themselves only have the right to wither away with the sands of time.

Here it is important to see the nation as a whole. It is not always right to consider leaders responsible for everything that happens within the society. Definitely, they have a dominant role and certain responsibilities as well, but the society in its entirety depends on all the people. Even the quality and characteristics of the leaders depend on the types of societies and the nature of people among whom they are nourished. So, the responsibility for everything does not fall on the leaders automatically; neither are they responsible to bring about all the positive changes that are required within a society. Therefore, the nation as a whole must rise to the occasion and respond to the challenges.

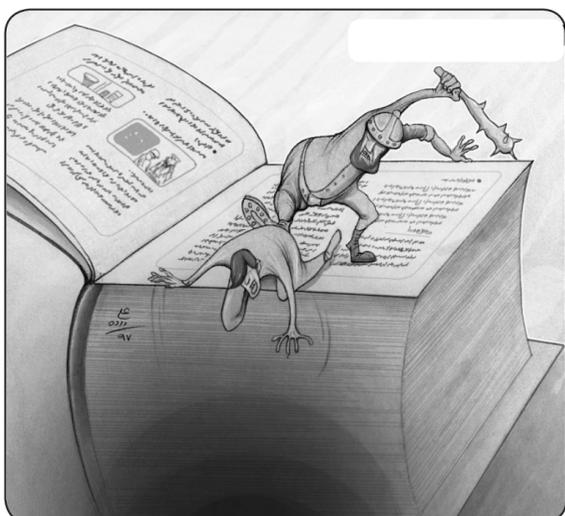
Moreover, the leaders are not always perfect, and there have been many cases wherein the leaders have proved that they want nothing more than their self-centered incentives. There are cases when they are corrupt and above all they are like all other human beings and they may commit mistakes, make wrong decisions and may even sacrifice the greater good for their families and friends. In such cases it becomes really important for a nation to be vigilant and must not become dumb sheep and follow them blindly.

Currently, Afghan nation is also going through a very crucial phase of its history and it is demanded from the nation to be vigilant and sensible and strive to write its history itself, instead of letting the circumstances take the control and pen down their destiny.

Though we have a government whose basic structure is based on unity and that also claims to a national unity government, concerns still remain regarding the exposed feelings and sentiments of the people for their countrymen. It has to be accepted that even if the leaders get together and form alliances and coalitions, nothing would save the nation from going towards chaos if the people abhor each other and become the victim of chauvinist and extremist feelings.

Therefore, it is important that Afghan nation must now start thinking and acting wisely. They have experienced an ugly phase of civil war and a very long history of instability. By now, they should be sensible enough not to fall in the trap of chauvinist feelings for their fellow beings and do not give any one opportunity to utilize their feelings for their self-centered incentives.

Now, they have to realize that their responsibilities are to declare clearly that they are no more ready to be fooled and to be utilized by others. Their rights are to announce their hatred for ignorance, poverty, conservative ideas, slavish thinking and growing hypocrisy, not for each other. They need to fight against the prevailing injustice and all the efforts that try to keep them away from education and knowledge. They should say no to the darkness and try to follow the light as it is the only way that they can live their life with prosperity and dignity.



President Ghani: Afghanistan is no more A Landlocked Country

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Afghan government, especially the national unity government has played important role in changing Afghanistan from a dependent land-lock country to a land-link and bridging state by opening several new aerial and ground transit routes. The latest one was inaugurated last Sunday by President Ashraf Ghani and the first Afghan cargo was sent to India through Chabahar Port in Iran. Addressing a ceremony in Zaranj city, a western city in Nimroz province, Ghani said that with the opening of the Chabahar route, the country's exports will increase from the current \$1 billion to \$2 billion until next year. He added that Afghanistan is not a landlocked country; it is the heart of Asia and Afghanistan is turning from an importer to an exporter country. "Today, Nimroz is turning from a deprived province into a key province," Ghani said as he pointed out to the importance of the Chabahar Port for Nimroz. Meanwhile, Ghani directed the relevant institutions to start work on upgrading Nimroz from a third-grade province to a second-grade province.

The Initial discussions for the Chabahar project began in May 2016 when India, Iran, and Afghanistan signed a trilateral agreement on the establishment of a Transit and Transport Corridor among the three countries as a regional hub for sea transportation. Later in February 2018 Iran said it had agreed to lease operational control of Chabahar to India for 18 months and in June, India's Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said India is trying to make Chabahar fully operational by 2019. The Indian ambassador Vinay Kumar said at the ceremony that Afghanistan's exports to India have increased by 40 percent after the launch of air corridor between Kabul and New Delhi.

The first export shipment through new opened route contained 570 tons of dried fruits, textiles, carpets, and other goods carried by 23 vehicles, Afghan officials said. The consignment is to be shipped to the port city of Mumbai in western India. previously, most of Afghanistan's imports and exports transited through Pakistan but Afghan business men always complained of challenges they faced in that country. The Chabahar project for Afghanistan was aimed to seek an alternative transit route and also make effort to build up Afghanistan's economy and reduce dependence on foreign aid and put a major dent in the illicit opium trade that has been a major source of revenue for the Taliban insurgency.

The role of India in success of Chabahar port project was very important. In December 2018, the state-owned India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) formally took over operations at Chabahar Port. The port provides easy access to the sea for Afghanistan, and India has developed this route to allow both countries to engage in trade bypassing Pakistan. Last year, India had sent 1.1 million tonnes of wheat and 2,000 tonnes of lentils to Afghanistan through Chabahar. In addition, they have also poured \$2 billion into development in Afghanistan since

the 2001 U.S.-led overthrow of the Taliban's government.

Both Afghanistan and India established an air corridor in 2017. Afghan exports to India stood at \$740 million in 2018, making it the largest export destination, officials said. Afghanistan plans to open other air corridors to send products to five countries, the ministry of commerce and industries said Wednesday, a move after the opening air corridors with India and Kazakhstan last year. "We are planning to open air corridors to Azerbaijan, Sri Lanka, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia and Turkey this year," said Mosafer Qoqandi, spokesman of the ministry. He called the air corridors important for the economic growth. "This is also important for us to know which products have good markets in these countries."

Afghanistan is also exporting products to India and Kazakhstan through the air corridors made in 2017. The corridor to Kazakhstan is rarely used, but two corridors to India's New Delhi and Mumbai are active in exporting Afghan goods to the Indian cities. Some Afghan traders say that the air corridors were costly and took more time to export their goods, but the chamber of commerce and industries calls them important to expand exports. Seyam Pasarlai, spokesman of the chamber said that most of the fresh fruit get rotten due to lack of proper warehouses, but the air corridors help the products be exported in a short time. "The air corridors cause more employment, we will get more commercial experiences, our commercial relations will increase that helps more political relations based on mutual benefits," said Taj Mohammad Talash, a business expert.

The geographical uniqueness of Afghanistan is that it borders with six countries and also has river ports. Very few countries of the world have this kind of strategic opportunity. From this point of view, Afghanistan has tremendous potential to develop its economy. But economic development cannot be achieved without a sound transport infrastructure, in which regard Afghanistan was very deficient and dependent. The country need to develop new road and rail infrastructures and also strengthen the existing ones. The border countries have business interests not only with Afghanistan but also among themselves. If the border countries want to establish ground connectivity between them, they are obliged to operate through Afghanistan. So development of transport infrastructure in Afghanistan is not only important for its own economy, but also for the neighboring countries as well.

In addition, Afghanistan has potential to develop its tourism sector but currently the internal situation does not favor in this regard. As much as the land link programs become operational, firstly internal and eventually external tourism will develop in the country. Tourism will not only boost the economy of the country, but will also help normalization of the internal situation.

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammadzahirakbari@gmail.com

Overcoming the Ideology of Climate Inaction

By: Anders Fremstad and Mark Paul

Three years ago, the United States achieved a grim milestone: its first climate refugees. With rising sea levels quickly engulfing the small town of Isle de Jean Charles, Louisiana, the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribespeople who have long called it home were forced to move. In the coming years, hundreds of communities across the US will suffer a similar fate, even if greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions cease immediately.

Despite the consensus among scientists about the causes and dire consequences of global warming, policymakers continue to turn a deaf ear to warnings of the impending climate crisis. Even before US President Donald Trump withdrew America from the 2015 Paris climate accord, the US had not begun to make sharp emissions reductions. The reason, climate activists increasingly argue, is capitalism, or more precisely the neoliberal ideology that has dominated economic policymaking in the West for at least 40 years.

As debates about a Green New Deal heat up, it is critical for the public to understand the role that neoliberalism has played in derailing policies to curtail emissions, phase out fossil fuels, and adopt renewable-energy technologies.

Climate wonks regularly warn that "business as usual" cannot avert climate change. But, while that is true, the phrase itself betrays a neoliberal obsession with making "business" fit for purpose - a tweak here, a nudge there - as if citizens were merely passive subjects of larger economic forces. We all have an active role to play in shaping the economy. But to do so requires that we first shake off the constraints that neoliberal thinking has placed on the public imagination.

Since 1980, the dominant view in Washington, DC, has been that the government should play a minimal role in the economy. As the anti-tax lobbyist Grover Norquist famously quipped, "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub."

The policies that have resulted from this mindset - defunding or otherwise curtailing public investment, deregulating the economy, and decentralizing democracy - have prevented the US from weaning itself off fossil fuels. Policymakers from both parties have refused to advocate, or even countenance, public investments in carbon-free alternative energy sources and infrastructure.

The belief that government can only ever impede economic dynamism represents a sharp departure from the Keynesian worldview that dominated policymaking from the 1940s to the 1960s. Policies based on the belief that government spending on public goods complements the private sector, rather than crowding it out, helped the US achieve unprecedented growth in the postwar era.

In a Keynesian economic regime, government interventions are regarded as necessary to solve coordination problems, which is precisely what climate change is. Sadly, a brief revival of Keynesian thinking after the 2008 financial crisis was quickly stifled by the politics of austerity across the West, foreclosing efforts to reduce GHG emissions through large public investments in transportation, green public housing, and

research and development.

The second pillar of neoliberalism, deregulation, has also contributed to climate change. When seeking to roll back energy-efficiency standards and rules governing fossil-fuel extraction, politicians love to say they are merely "cutting red tape." But more often than not, these same politicians have been the recipients of the hydrocarbon industry's largesse.

Unfortunately, as the climate crisis has grown, so, too, has the pressure to deregulate fossil fuels. For example, in January, a large group of eminent economists published an open letter calling for a modest carbon price (tax) to replace "cumbersome regulations." Never mind that those same regulations have yielded significant reductions in GHG emissions in states like California. Regulations are also largely responsible for the emissions reductions achieved at the federal level, through programs such as renewable portfolio standards and Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards.

If the US is to have any chance of reducing emissions in line with what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recommends, appropriate environmental regulation must be recognized as a complement to large-scale public investments and carbon pricing, not a substitute.

The third way neoliberalism has undermined climate action is by shifting decisions from the federal to the state and local level. While local control is useful in some policy arenas, it has exacerbated the tragedy of the commons with respect to climate change. At the same time that neoliberalism prescribes a carbon price as the solution to climate change, it rejects the centralization needed to make such a policy actually work.

After all, the chances that all US states will implement a carbon price are slim to none. The fossil-fuel industry and its lobbyists have long pitted individual US states - as well as individual labor unions and chapters - against one another by promising to create local jobs in fossil-fuel extraction. The industry has also campaigned aggressively against green ballot initiatives at the state and local level, where it can easily outspend the competition.

So long as policymakers are bound by the straitjacket of neoliberal ideology, there can be no meaningful progress toward addressing climate change, as US Senator Dianne Feinstein recently made clear to a group of young climate activists in a recorded encounter that was by turns condescending and combative. Fortunately, the widespread public support for a Green New Deal shows that voters do not share this ideology.

Still, to achieve the Green New Deal's goal of net carbon neutrality in ten years will require not just an economy-wide carbon price-and-dividend policy, but also large-scale public investment and complementary regulations. Taken together, these measures could mobilize America's latent productive capacities in ways not seen since World War II. Without them, the global effort to tackle climate change will have a snowball's chance in Hell.

Anders Fremstad is an assistant professor of economics at Colorado State University. Mark Paul is an assistant professor of economics at New College of Florida and a fellow at the Roosevelt Institute.