Afghanistan's Governance Challenges

Governance has been defined as the provision of the political, social and economic goods that a citizen has the right to expect from his or her state, and that a state has the responsibility to deliver to its citizens. Good governance encompasses state-society relations that are democratic, including respect for human rights and the rule of law. They are developmental and allow for the management of the economy in a way that enables economic growth, structural change, and the judicious use of available resources in a sustainable manner; they are socially inclusive, in particular of minorities and ethnic or religious diversity. Embodied in effective governance are the processes, mechanisms, and policies that deliver essential public goods and services that citizens have come to expect. These public goods and services range from safety and security to political participation, the rule of law, and human development, among others.

At National and Sub-national levels, numerous norms and frameworks have been

adopted to promote democracy and the rule of law in Afghanistan. However, a persistent delivery deficit prevents these norms from being transformed into reality. While all governance challenges in Afghanistan do not originate uniquely from the country, the reality is that ongoing Afghan initiatives to address these crises have often been insufficient.

Five challenges to effective governance in Afghanistan stand out: diversity and the current identity crises; service delivery; management of natural resources; citizen engagement and the participation of women and youth; and coordination and accountability

DIVERSITY AMID IDENTITY CRISES

Building on ethnic rule's multilayered identities of first-, second-, and third-class citizens, Afghanistan regarded ethno linguistic diversities as challenge to national unity and contrary to the nation-building project. It sought to dilute them in various systems of common-identity, single-nation projects and one-party systems. The failure to accommodate multiple community identities in a society constitutes a critical challenge that poses severe threats to lasting peace, stability, and development, with particular importance in fragile and conflict-affected contexts of the relevant country.

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Public service delivery and social protection are increasingly seen as critical components of development strategies to tackle poverty and build more stable societies. The delivery of basic

services is considered a tangible and important source of the state's performance legitimacy, and an opportunity for a government to establish its credibility. Lack of equal service delivery has been one of the main causes of the ethnic conflicts in the country.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Afghanistan is rich with valuable natural resources. While these economic opportunities present exciting possibilities for development and growth, history has shown that natural resources can be catastrophic for democratic governance and peace. Referred to as the "resource curse," many countries in Asia including Afghanistan have found that resource wealth manipulate incentives, causing corruption and competition for resources, which leads to a breakdown in governance structures and can cause conflict.
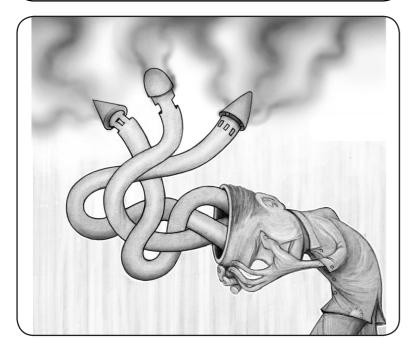
CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Citizen participation is an essential element of democratic governance. It allows populations to stay informed and express their views about the challenges they face. Citizen participation can take the form of institutionalized information sharing, consultation, dialogue, representation, volunteering, or questioning and monitoring. Sadly, the gaps between citizens and their elected leaders appear to be widening, often stemming from governments' inability to deliver expected goods and services to populations combined with exclusionary governance practices. Distrust, and in some cases outright rejection, of organized politics—especially among the youth of Afghanistan, who constitute a significant proportion of Afghanistan's population—is a challenge that impacts social cohesion and is at the root of social unrest in various parts of the continent. This further contributes to emerging threats such as radicalization and religious extremism in Afghanistan.

ACCOUNTABILITY

As countries emerge from violent conflict, one of the critical questions is how to address issues of accountability, reconciliation, and justice in the face of mass atrocities. Addressing impunity on the country demands national, regional, and international coordination and innovation. Justice should not be limited to prosecutorial and punitive justice; it must also be geared toward national healing, reconciliation, and reintegration of perpetrators and victims, with a view to national unity and reconstruction. Transitional justice processes can combine accountability with community-based and traditional justice, truth telling, reconciliation, reparations, institutional and legal reforms, memorialization, and socioeconomic and gender justice.

Building on efforts undertaken by International, national and Sub-national actors, concrete and innovative strategies are needed to enhance democratic and accountable governance in Afghanistan. Afghanistan at peace with itself requires more than the absence of war: it requires accountable governance that includes effective service delivery, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and transparent management of natural resources.

Can Peace Change the Nature of Terrorists?

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Terrorism and suicide can never be considered as an unreasonable or accidental behavior. The terrorism phenomenon follows a strategic and rational logic. Considering terrorism as a behavioral disorder arising from an ideological or psychological depression distracts the analytical mind from reality. This deviating approach keeps us away from resolving the issue and choosing a right solution. The reason for all this confusion is that we are in a turmoil and disconcertment state against the shock of terrorist suicide. This confusion is also due to the analysis of terrorist incidents with common norms and emotional subjectivities. Since the act of terror never conforms to human and social norms, it seems meaningless and non-understandable to the people. On Contrary to the common beliefs, terrorism is a well-intentioned and well-calculated behavior that attempts to achieve a political goal.

It must be accepted that terrorism is never an imported phenomenon, and need to be cautious that political distortions may not deviate our minds from the origins of terrorists and their nesting grounds. It is true that the ideas of fundamentalism may come from another land, but it is never possible for a completely alien with a different language to accurately identify the mission addresses in order to do their terror job. Evidence suggests that terrorists and suicide bombers have a full local identity, but are being funded and directed by outside powers and political networks. They cannot find their funding resources from the domestic addresses. Hence, they rely on external resources and receive comprehensive support from the outsiders. As studies show terrorists are the descendants of their own homeland considering themselves the real compassionate of their land, and so they seek to institutionalize their sovereignty for the purpose of implementing their radical ideas in that land.

This is why we cannot deny the link between terrorism and politics. Religious engagement is completely different from systematic terrorist activities. The terrorists are seeking to establish their absolute ideological sovereignty by killing their ideological opponents. Based on this, it is realized that terrorism is working in a thoughtful way in the process of reaching their sinister goal; they try to inflict the most devastating damage with the least costs. According to this perspective, the act of terror can be defined as deliberate punishment in order to make a fundamental change. So, terrorists act and violence are based on cost and benefit analysis being used as the most effective method. The tactic of assassination and assault is used to impose the most destructive damage with the least expenses. According to this logic, organizations such as ISIL and the Taliban are neither unreasonable nor crazy people.

Suicide bombing tries to reduce or increase the intensity of attacks as required in pursuit of its specific political goals. Therefore, the operations in Afghanistan have been increasing in the following years. From time to time, they create a massive wave of fear and massacre to plague the moral of society, and then disappear to prepare for another threat. In some cases, they put the community and the government in neglect of a long absence to properly identify and act upon their own goals. Thus, they gradually use punishment and impose more cost on government to compel it for surrendering and achieving more privileges.

The terrorist networks in Afghanistan have found this method more efficiently; therefore, they have recieved more privileges and confidence now. It has been known for some time that some of the designated areas of the country have actually been transferred to them as a territorial area of the Taliban, and then changed into the safe havens of the Taliban and other terrorists. Using Democratic and tolerant methods with terrorists are completely wrong, and it is conducive to strengthening the confidence of the terrorists. In fact, working with the Taliban through peaceful means has given them opportunities to become more hopeful for victory. The best way to curb the suicide attack is reducing their confidence for victory. This is the main reason for failure of terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria. Though terrorists had accurate and well coordinated strategy in Iraq and Syria, the invasive battle of Iraqi government makes them disappointed insofar as completely abandon their operations. Iraq was the homeland of ISIL but The Iraqi government has never approached them with jokes and flexibility. With inflicting severe blows and bombardment put them in condition that forgot their way how to escape and how to apply their method of terrifying. This way, the government of Iraq could overcome the security challenges and could defeat them.

In Afghanistan, however, the theorem is quite the opposite and has fully failed. In Afghanistan the enemy has been able to make the people disappointed with brutal repeated massacres. Therefore, the hope of living and continuity of life in Afghanistan is more similar to luck. To this extent, flexibility against terrorist is not acceptable and neither have good consequences. Iraq and Syria never used this method otherwise they would have been swallowed by ISIL. There is no difference between the Taliban and ISIL and al-Qaeda. Using the experience of Iraq, Syria has also succeeded to eliminate the absolute domination of terrorists. It is unlikely that a group of professional killers who has long slaughtered human beings can change their nature through peace process and respect civil values.

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Is Canceling Brexit Now Inevitable?

By: Anatole Kaletsky

In times of political turmoil, events can move from impossible to inevitable without even passing through improbable. In early 2016, the idea of Britain leaving the European Union seemed almost as absurd as the next American president being the six-time bankrupt and serial sex pest Donald Trump. A few months later, Brexit and the Trump presidency were universally acknowledged as the inevitable consequence of an anti-elitist, anti-globalization backlash that was predictable decades ago.

This sense of inevitability, far more than genuine anti-European conviction, is what has discouraged Britain from changing its mind about a pointless and self-destructive policy that few voters cared about until 2016. The message from post-Brexit polling and focus groups has been: "We all know that Brexit has to happen, so why don't the politicians just get on with it?"

But with the Brexit process now moving toward its climax, another outcome is moving from impossible to inevitable: Britain could soon change its mind and decide to stay in the EU. This reversal of fortune could begin next month, when Prime Minister Theresa May is expected to lose the decisive parliamentary vote on her Brexit deal.

If and when this defeat happens, May will face two unpalatable options. She could preside over a "No Deal" rupture with Europe – tantamount to a declaration of economic war against the EU – and risk a 2008-level economic crisis accompanied by a border upheaval in Ireland that could reignite the "Troubles." Or she could break her extravagant promises to honor the "people's instruction" from the 2016 referendum and allow a new popular vote that might cancel Brexit.

To avoid this invidious choice, May could try one last time to push her proposals through Parliament after losing the vote scheduled for the week of January 14. But if this last-ditch effort fails, her choices will be reduced to a No Deal rupture with Europe and a new referendum.

With the options thus narrowed, the risks and sacrifices of the "horror," as Britain's main business lobbies now publicly describe No Deal, will quickly come into focus, and a bipartisan parliamentary majority will surely converge to block this outcome. Several Conservative MPs have already promised to resign from the party if May shifts to supporting No Deal, and the rebel numbers could certainly swell enough to bring down her government.

As the impossibility of legislating either No Deal or May's deal has become apparent, the aura of inevitability that has protected Brexit from serious challenge since 2016 is vanishing, and soon the sense of inevitability may swing in favor of a new referendum. This shift has already started in the British media. Having spent the past two years denouncing anyone who challenged Brexit as "enemies of the people" and a traitor to democracy, the BBC, The Times, and other influential media organs have suddenly remembered that an essential principle of democracy is that voters have the right to change their minds.

But just as the "principled" objections to a new referendum are disappearing, a much more practical problem has emerged: What question should be asked in a final "People's Vote"? Should voters choose between remaining in the EU or accepting May's withdrawal agreement? Or should the options be No Brexit versus No Deal? Or what about the narrower choice between May's Deal and No Deal, demanded by Brexit zealots who argue that the possibility of continuing EU membership was eliminated by the 2016 referendum?

The obvious answer would be to present voters with all three options – No Deal, May's Deal, or No Brexit. But the problem then arises of how the votes should be counted if none of these options commands a clear majority. Under the first-past-the-post system used in British and American elections, the option supported by the most votes would win. But that would be completely unacceptable to Brexit supporters, who would be guaranteed to lose if their voters were split between May's Deal and No Deal.

Thus, to gain democratic legitimacy, the votes would have to be counted either through a preferential system, which asks voters for first and second choices, or with a two-stage process. For example, the ballot could first ask voters to state whether they accepted the government's Brexit proposal, and then to answer a second conditional question: If the government's deal does not win majority support, would you prefer No Deal or remaining in the EU? Alternatively, voters could be asked, first, whether they want to remain in the EU or go ahead with Brexit, and then, in the event that Brexit wins, whether they would prefer May's Deal or No Deal.

The strongest objection to a second referendum is that the different counting systems could give very different results, at least in theory, thereby undermining the legitimacy of the entire process. But this objection turns out to be theoretically valid only if public opinion is divided fairly evenly between the three possible outcomes. In practice, opinion now seems to be shifting to the point where clear answers are likely, regardless of how the questions are asked.

In the first detailed poll of all three Brexit options, conducted by YouGov in early December, a standard first-past-the-post vote would result in Remain winning a huge 54% absolute majority, against 28% support for No Deal and 18% for May's Deal. In a simple choice against May's deal, the majority for Remain would be even bigger, at 62%. And in a preferential vote count that redistributed the second preferences of May's supporters, Remain would still win by a decisive margin of 57% to 43%.

Of course, voters could change their minds in a referendum campaign. But as matters stand today, a new referendum would produce a clear majority for Britain remaining an EU member, regardless of how the votes were counted or the questions were asked. This suggests that the force of inevitability is starting to move against Brexit. "We all know that Brexit has to be canceled," voters may soon be saying, "so why don't the politicians just get on with it?"

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