

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



January 21, 2018

Democratization of Our Society

It is easier to dream for democracy and cherish its idea but difficult to achieve and maintain the true principles of it. The road to democracy is filled with difficulties and hardships and requires a strong will and determination. It tests the temperament of the leaders and the patience of the nation as a whole. Moreover, there are certain requirements that must be achieved before the journey towards a stable political system can be started.

One of the most important essentials is a strong constitution. Constitution implies a rule of law rather than of men. Every citizen is granted equal rights to pursue happiness, liberty and individuality, enshrined in the constitution, must be applied with letter and spirit, seeing as it curbs despotic tendencies of the rulers and safeguards the rights of the people. It ensures that there is no arbitrariness in governing people and members belonging to different groups are given an equal treatment.

No two human beings can ever think alike, it is natural to come across dissenting opinions at every step, in every field. True democratic spirit lies in overcoming dissent through discussion and persuasion and not through coercion. In a democracy, views are not imposed, views are shaped and molded. Democracy inculcates among the people the habit of tolerance and compromise and teaches them to show due regard for the opinions and sentiments of others. Democracy requires not merely an absence of ignorance but also that the citizens are adequately educated.

If knowledge remains scanty, fragmentary and confined to narrow circles and if the mass of humanity remains steeped in ignorance and error, there can be no prospects for the success of democracy. Education makes citizens vigilant and also gives them the boldness to criticize government measures which are ill-conceived or harmful. In fact, education produces wise leadership and an enlightened and alert public. A free and fair press is another vital necessity for democracy to flourish. It ventilates public opinion and enables the government to frame policies in the interests of the masses.

The newspaper acts as a kind of liaison between the government and the people. It acquaints the people with the policy and principles of the government. At the same time, it reflects the public reaction to this policy and thus enables the government to modify it. Since it gives such extensive publicity to the movements of the ministers and other higher-ups, it exercises a very sobering influence on them. It does not let them forget that they are in office as the representatives of the people to whom they are finally answerable. It keeps a powerful check on the corruption and tyranny of the government.

For the health and efficiency of a democracy, an effective, vigilant and working opposition is indispensable. Strong opposition exercises a healthy restraint on the ruling party and prevents it from subjecting the people to arbitrary and despotic rule. No free large country has been without political parties. None has shown how a representative government could efficiently work in the absence of strong political parties. Effective opposition saves a country from turmoil; it safeguards it from coup d'état. If the party in power neglects public welfare, the voters can oust it and give power to the opposition.

A conflict of ideas is anytime better than a clash of arms. Without opposition the state has no elasticity, no true self determination. A constant probe into the activities of the government by the opposition keeps the government vigilant and prevents it from being arbitrary. Legislative excellence is promoted by a recognized opposition. Good legislation is possible only when the law is discussed threadbare before it enters the law book. Effective opposition also makes possible active and intelligent participation of public in the affairs of the government. Party campaigns are educational campaigns.

Propaganda through press, public meetings and pamphlets imparts political education to the masses and awakens them to their responsibility, opposition keeps a nation's mind alive as the rise and fall of the sweeping tide freshen the water of long ocean inlets. Thus the public business suffers a great deal and the interest of the nation is neglected. Disagreements keep the public divided into hostile camps. The spirit of rivalry and animosity pollutes the social life the country.

A sense of responsibility and a desire to give topmost priority to public interest against pen or party interest would certainly boost its image in the public eye. On the contrary, lack of discipline and constructive approach inevitably leads to instable confusion and reversal of economic progress.

It is now quite a few years since we embarked upon a democratic experiment. Today, when we make an appraisal of our democracy, we find it still lacking in certain important requisites. A large majority of our people are still illiterate. Glaring disparities between the rich and the poor not only persist but have become accentuated. There is no economic security; food is scarce, poverty appalling and unemployment rampant. Ethnicity and class exclusiveness still haunts our minds! The masses also lack civic probity. Corrupt and dishonest administration is eating into the very vitals of our democracy. Democracy can only flourish in our country, given that the true essence of democratic values and culture, is understood, implemented and practiced devoid of discretion of any sort. Accordingly democratization of society leads to prosperous Afghanistan.



Formulating Development Policies Responsive to the Needs of all groups

By Sakhi Rezaie

Responsiveness and accountability is focused on to the centrality of the social contract between the state and citizens. That is: States require responding to the real needs of the people and being accountable for their decisions and actions before the people. Citizens should fulfill their part of the contract by participating in democratic processes, contributing to takes and generally participating in civic life.

However, recent events in parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America, underscores the importance of addressing democratic governance deficits at the national and sub-national levels in order to ensure the legitimacy of development policies and to support empowerment of people in the relevant context. Also, the findings of the various researches indicate that the public sector must undergo reform in order to build the trust of the citizens in government and public services and ultimately close the gap between the people and their governments.

These findings suggest that such challenges facing these countries or regions cannot be tackled alone; therefore, it requires the public sector to be willing strongly to solicit the assistance and cooperation of civil society, the private sector, think tanks and the international community if it is to succeed in its development goals.

The current trends emphasize the need for a new social contract that needs giving more space for citizens to express their preferences and for governments to conceptualize the way responsibility and accountability are shared among the governments, the private sector and the civil society organizations for formulating development strategies and providing the essential services to the people.

Grasping the challenges as a means to make a real difference

The findings of the United Nations System Task Team show that, if the governments are to make a real difference for the people, they must grasp the dimensions of the challenge. They must recognize that the drivers of that challenge include unsustainable lifestyles, production and consumption patterns and impact of population growth. As the population of any country grows and the number of middle class consumption may increase, and the demand for resources will rise exponentially.

As the quantity and quality of demands of the people change so fast, it requires a new political economy and democratic governance for sustainable development. It also, requires that environmental devastation shall be stopped through the consolidated actions of both governments and corporations. All levels and actors of governance shall embrace sustainable development for the

future. All levels of governments need to move from silo mentalities to integrated policy making, one the main challenges of sustainable development in countries such as Afghanistan.

Eradication of poverty is something that leaders have promised time and again throughout the history. Today in may actually be done if there is a strong political will to do so. To achieve this, every government needs to undergo five big transformative shifts for a universal sustainable development agenda: 1) leave no one behind; 2) put sustainable development at the core; 3) transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth; 4) build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all; an 5) forge a new global partnership.

In addition, promoting empowerment of people equally in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all is one of the preconditions for development strategies. The issue of social integration is one of the main lacks of development policies in Afghanistan.

Considering the fact that Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country, social integration plays a key role in the successful implementation of any development policy in the country because it ensures that no ethnic group is left behind. As the experience show, development policies in Afghanistan have not been formulated and implemented in a fair manner and even the policies which have been developed after 2011 have been biased non-inclusive here.

The concrete measures identified as enabling people's empowerment include: 1) social policies addressing needs of disadvantaged social groups; 2) people-centered development as a core objective of social and sustainable development; 3) more comprehensive, integrated inclusive policies and programs that aim to improve access and opportunities for all; 4) strengthening the capacity of institutions facilitating the participation and engagement of citizens so that they become more efficient, effective, transparent and accountable; 5) ensuring access to justice and legal instruments to reduce/eliminate poverty and inequality; and 6) promoting inclusive sustainable labor markets, social protection and investments.

Last but not least, special efforts should be made to foster the participation of all people, including women, people living in poverty and those belonging to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups including children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, in all aspects of political, economic, social, civic and cultural life, particularly the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as appropriate, of policies that affect them.

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Widespread Violation of Human Rights

By Hujjatullah Zia

The human rights discourse seeks to support the rights and dignity of people regardless of their racial and religious backgrounds. Supporting mankind is the main objective of the human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL). People are born free with fundamental rights and should be able to exercise their rights and liberty without being discriminated for one reason or another. Non-discrimination is a universal principle and needs to be supported globally.

Humanitarian law is observed in global war and civil conflicts, but human rights are applicable during the time of war and peace. For instance, one is allowed to violate one's dignity neither during the war nor peace. On the other hand, targeting civilians, the wounded, and war prisoners will take place during the war. There are also rights the subject of human rights and humanitarian law, both of which seek to support the rights and dignity of mankind in all circumstances.

According to international instruments related to human rights, all people are born free and equal in rights and dignity and should have freedom of thought and expression; be treated on the principle of humanity; be immune from slavery, discrimination, and torture. Degrading one or treating them with inhumanity, torturing, and violating their dignity are not allowed at all and they are supported by both human rights and IHL. Treating based on human principles is a golden rule. During conflicts, non-combatants, the wounded, and war prisoners must be treated with humanity. To put it succinctly, treating one with humanity and respecting one's inherent dignity is the non-derogable rights - i.e. they should be maintained all times and under all circumstances, including during states of emergencies. The principle of humanity is supported by both human rights and IHL. Therefore, inflicting unnecessary sufferings or torture during the war is against IHL.

In fact, violating one's rights will outrage the public conscience and all states have to show reaction against this act. That is to say, when one falls the victim of discrimination on the basis of his race, color, or creed in any parts of the world, it will be outrageous to all.

Similarly, the escalated militancy and regional conflicts shedding the blood of people are highly shocking. Despite international instruments and democratic discourse, the rights and dignity of people are violated to a great extent. Both states and militants are involved in violating human

rights and IHL. The escalated militancy has compounded the violation of human rights and IHL since the militants respect neither national nor international laws. They trample upon the rights of civilians, including women and children, in the worst possible way. A large number of people lose their lives in light of militancy and conflicts. Terrorist fighters spill streams of blood and show no respect to one's life or liberty. The graph of civilian casualty is very high in war-torn countries.

According to the Civilian Protection Advocacy Group (CPAG), about 1,372 people were killed and 2,360 others were wounded in Afghanistan within the last eight months of 2017. The bulk of casualties resulted from suicide bombings, airstrikes, and ground operations. The self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has claimed the responsibility for the death of 327 and injury of 924, the report said. It added that foreign airstrikes killed 62 and Afghan Air Forces strike killed 167.

Considering the large-scale civilian casualties in Afghanistan, the humanitarian law is not observed in war-torn countries - not only Afghanistan but many other states such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen, etc. Both states and militants are involved in violating IHL.

It should be noted that it is not only states to observe humanitarian law but also individuals. When a person commits crime against humanity or genocide, s/he must be prosecuted - be it in international conflict or civil unrest. Similarly, torturing war prisoners or raping women, who belong to hostile party, by a soldier will be considered flagrant violation of IHL and he will be prosecuted.

To one's unmitigated chagrin, the militants violate IHL through targeting civilians and torturing war prisoners with impunity. They show no respect to the law of war since they are not legally formed. In such a case, all states will have to campaign against terrorist groups as a reaction to violation of human rights and IHL since protecting human rights is the responsibility of each state.

To sum up, it is believed that violation of human rights or IHL outrages the public conscience and all states have to react to this issue through prosecuting individual and imposing sanction on states, which infringe on one's rights and liberty. Thus, the international community, comprised of states, needs to put an end to violation of human rights via adopting an effective mechanism.

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