

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



January 31, 2017

Anti-Corruption Strategy Must Target the Powerful

Corruption has been one of the most dominating issues in Afghanistan since the formation of so-called democratic government after the downfall of Taliban. One of the major reasons that there has not been any considerable achievement regarding fight against corruption is the fact that the authoritative institutions and individuals have lacked true commitment; which ultimately provided them the room and the opportunity to benefit from the situation and make their own bank balance. So much has been said and so many instances, examples and data have proved that corruption has devoured much of the assistance funds that were for the purpose of improving the life standards of the poor and deserving people, yet there has not been any tangible measure taken to stop the situation and the result is that Afghanistan is still among the 10-most corrupt countries in the world.

No strategy for fighting corruption in Afghanistan can be successful unless it starts making the strong individuals and institutions accountable for any sort of corruption that they commit. The norm has been that the rich, powerful and influential people easily dodge the justice system, while the poor have to receive the negative consequences. In fact, the poor are influenced in two different ways by corruption. First, if they are alleged in any case of corruption they have to go through inefficient and most unjust process of the justice system. Second, they are the ones who have to pay bribes and search for recommendations in order to get their works done in the departments and organizations that are corrupt in their dealings. While the rich through their influence, get away with their corrupt activities and at the same time get their works done from different organizations without any difficulty.

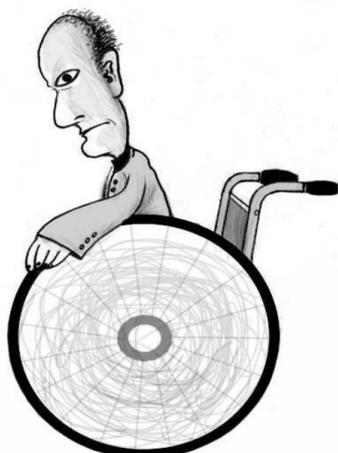
Therefore, it stands paramount that the rich and influential people, both in public and private sectors, who are involved in practicing corruption and promulgating it through their actions should be brought to justice. It is important in so many ways; first it will support in identifying the huge cases of corruption that involve large sums of money; second, it will set example for others - finding the influential people brought to justice and held accountable for their corrupt deeds would send a message to the people and to other officials that they cannot run away from justice if they practice corruption.

Such initiative definitely requires support and determination to fight against the whole system; particularly, fighting influential and powerful individuals; nevertheless, there is no other option available. Therefore, it is important that the government and the international community must address this particular issue if something worthwhile is required to be achieved. A positive step in this regard is the establishment of Anti-Corruption Criminal Justice Center (ACJC) to tackle major corruption cases of government officials in Afghanistan. Funded by the UK government ACJC building was inaugurated on Sunday, January 29, by the commander of the Combined Security Transition Command (CSTC-A) Robert Kaiser, who said on the occasion that corruption inflicts millions of dollars in financial losses to the Afghan government, and it was necessary for the officials to take firm steps to stop the scourge. He also said in his statement, "Corruption is the enemy of Afghanistan and it kills from the inside out, corruption is why police walk away from their checkpoints."

Meanwhile, the British ambassador to Kabul Dominic Jermy, said in a statement, "Today is a landmark moment - the inauguration of the UK-funded permanent facility for the ACJC; an institution that is really demonstrating that no longer will high-level corruption in Afghanistan be tolerated... The UK wholeheartedly congratulates this government for its efforts to really turn the corner on the scourge of corruption that for too long has taken money and services away from the deserving Afghan people. That's why I'm proud the UK has provided Afghanistan this professional facility, to allow the brave officials of the ACJC to really hold those at the top to account."

On the other hand, the US embassy welcomed the establishment of the facility for the ACJC in Kabul, hoping investigators would benefit from it. US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Hugo Llorens said that the new location would provide a secure and enabling environment for the investigators, trial attorneys and judges of the Anti-Corruption Justice Center. His statement read, "Corruption is a cancer that plagues this nation and must be dealt with. The Anti-Corruption Justice Center has the potential to play a vital role in deterring corruption by attacking impunity".

It is now important to see how the matters will be dealt with in this new facility. The most important factor in this regard would be the response and the cooperation of the Afghan government officials. It is imperative that Afghan government must show its resolve against corruption and must not hesitate to separate itself from the corrupt individuals who have been devouring the rights of the poor people and at the same time defaming the nation as a whole.



An Iron Fist against Whom?

By Hujjatullah Zia

On January 27, US President Donald J Trump signed two orders: authorizing the construction of a wall on the US-Mexico border and banning visas to the US to nationals from seven countries: Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, which are all Muslim-majority nations. During the run-up to the November 8 election, Trump promised to ban Muslims from entering the US. He also promised to build a wall along the Mexican border to deter Mexicans from traveling to America. Trump also indicated that both Pakistan and Afghanistan will be among the countries whose citizens will have to go through an "extreme vetting" process before entering the US. In his inaugural speech, Trump pledged to "eradicate from the face of the Earth" Islamic terrorism. He believes that his predecessor Barack Obama and secretaries of state Hillary Clinton and John Kerry had allowed tens of thousands of people to enter the country.

Reports say that the Trump administration would establish a registry for collecting data about Muslims living in the US brought thousands of protesters out in a New York park on Wednesday night and a former secretary of state said she too would register as a Muslim if Muslims were asked to do so. Madeleine Albright, the first woman US secretary of state, tweeted: "I was raised Catholic, became Episcopalian and found out later my family was Jewish. I stand ready to register as Muslim in solidarity." Her message was re-tweeted by about 20,000 people and liked by almost 40,000.

The ban on refugees and immigrants triggered a strong reaction and protests have been held in cities across the United States. In the US capital, thousands, reportedly, gathered outside the White House, while more than 1,000 protesters assembled in New York City's Battery Park to demonstrate against Trump's executive order.

British Prime Minister Theresa May is said to disagree with Trump's order and will challenge the US government if it has an adverse effect on British nationals. Moreover, German Chancellor Angela Merkel also regretted the travel ban. "She is convinced that even the necessary, resolute fight against terrorism doesn't justify putting people of a particular origin or particular faith under general suspicion," her spokesman is cited as saying.

As was reported not too long after white supremacist Dylann Roof killed nine black Americans in Charleston, white Americans cause the largest numbers of American deaths by terrorist acts on US soil. Yet unsurprisingly, Trump has not signed any executive orders specifically targeting white Americans. In addition, Muslims face with challenges in public places in the US on the grounds of their race and religion follow-

ing the spread of Islamophobia by terrorist groups and harsh rhetoric against Muslims. As a result, Robin Rhodes, 57-year-old man was accused of assaulting Rabeeya Khan, who was wearing a head scarf, while working at Delta Airlines' Sky Lounge on Wednesday evening. "He punched the door, which struck Khan's chair, and then he threatened her and kicked her in the right leg". A statement quoted him as, "Trump is here now. He will get rid of all of you."

It should be noted that Muslims bear the brunt of terrorist attacks and the radical ideology of fundamental groups can never ever represent Muslims or Islamic view.

The terrorist fighters are believed to be pawn used in big political games. In other words, all the militant fighters are not ideological but also mercenary fighters - a bunch of irreligious/anti-religious fighters who enjoy harming others and evil runs in their blood.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) - which was endorsed following the World War II to reduce the pains and sufferings of mankind and put an end to violence and carnage - states, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." The natural and inviolable rights and dignity of mankind is globally confessed and no one is supposed to violate one's rights on the basis of their race, color or religion. When a member of the Black is insulted or harmed in the US due to their color, one's conscience will be outraged in Afghanistan and we expect vice versa.

That is to say, we live in "the global village" and affected by the sorrow and happiness of a group. Therefore, a strong will and intention against terrorist networks will be appreciated by every country, especially Afghanistan which is one of the greatest victims in Asia, but spreading hatred against Muslims is beyond the tolerance of the public.

It would be a matter of great concern to see that Muslims pay sacrifices from both sides. The human societies will have to accept one another and practice upon the UDHR and extend the spirit of brotherhood. Degrading a nation or violating the rights and freedoms of a group will be counterproductive and lead to horrible consequences. Terrorist networks must not be able to divide the world through stoking racial and ideological tensions.

The world should join forces to combat terrorism and eradicate their sanctuaries so as to bring global and long-lasting peace and stability.

All nations seek peace and it is possible via being an iron-fist against terrorism and accepting one another.

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An Unstable Economic Order?

By Mohamed A. El-Erian

The retreat of the advanced economies from the global economy - and, in the case of the United Kingdom, from regional trading arrangements - has received a lot of attention lately. At a time when the global economy's underlying structures are under strain, this could have far-reaching consequences. Whether by choice or necessity, the vast majority of the world's economies are part of a multilateral system that gives their counterparts in the advanced world - especially the United States and Europe - enormous privileges. Three stand out.

First, because they issue the world's main reserve currencies, the advanced economies get to exchange bits of paper that they printed for goods and services produced by others. Second, for most global investors, these economies' bonds are a quasi-automatic component of portfolio allocations, so their governments' budget deficits are financed in part by other countries' savings. The advanced economies' final key advantage is voting power and representation.

They command either veto power or a blocking minority in the Bretton Woods institutions (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank), which gives them a disproportionate influence on the rules and practices that govern the international economic and monetary system. And, given their historical dominance of these organizations, their nationals are de facto assured the top positions.

These privileges don't come for free - at least they shouldn't. In exchange, the advanced economies are supposed to fulfill certain responsibilities that help ensure the system's functioning and stability. But recent developments have cast doubts on whether the advanced economies are able to hold up their end of this bargain. Perhaps the most obvious example is the 2008 global financial crisis.

The result of excessive risk-taking and lax regulation in the advanced economies, the financial system's near-meltdown disrupted global trade, threw millions into unemployment, and almost tipped the world into a multi-year depression. But there have been other lapses, too.

For example, political obstacles to comprehensive economic policymaking in many advanced economies have undermined the implementation of structural reforms and responsive fiscal policies in recent years, holding back business investment, undermining productivity growth, worsening inequality, and threatening future potential growth. Such economic lapses have contributed to the emergence of anti-establishment political movements that are looking to change - or are already changing - long-established cross-border trade relations, including those within the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Meanwhile, a prolonged and excessive reliance on monetary policy, including direct central-bank involvement in market activities, has distorted asset prices and contributed to resource misallocation. And the advanced economies - particularly Europe - have shown little appetite for reforming outdated elements of governance and representation at the international financial institutions, despite major changes in

the global economy.

The result of all this is a multilateral system that is less effective, less collaborative, less trusted, and more vulnerable to ad hoc tinkering. Against this background, it should not be surprising that globalization and regionalization no longer command the degree of support they once did - or that some rising political movements on both sides of the Atlantic are condemning both concepts to win more support for their own causes. It is not yet clear whether this is a temporary and reversible phenomenon or the beginning of a protracted challenge to the functioning of the global economy.

What is clear is that it is affecting two important relationships. The first is the relationship between small and large economies. For a long time, small, well-managed, and open economies were the leading beneficiaries of the Bretton Woods system and, more generally, of multilateralism.

Their size not only made them crave access to outside markets; it also made other market actors more willing to integrate them into regional pacts, owing to their limited displacement potential.

Membership in effective international institutions brought these countries into consequential global policy discussions, while their own capabilities allowed them to exploit opportunities in cross-border production and consumption chains. But, at a time of surging nationalism, these small and open economies, however well managed, are likely to suffer. Their trading relationships are less stable; the trade pacts on which they depend are vulnerable; and their participation in global policy discussions is less assured.

The second relationship is that between the Bretton Woods institutions and parallel institutional arrangements. For example, while they pale in significance to, say, the World Bank, China-led institutions have proved appealing to a growing number of countries; most US allies have joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, despite American opposition. Similarly, bilateral payment agreements - which, not long ago, most countries would have opposed via the IMF, owing to their inconsistency with multilateralism - are proliferating. The concern is that these alternative approaches could undermine, rather than reinforce, a predictable and beneficial rules-based system of cross-border interactions.

The Bretton Woods organizations, instituted after World War II to maintain stability, risk losing their influence, and the countries with the clout to bolster them seem unwilling at this stage to press ahead boldly with the needed reforms. If these tendencies continue, developing countries will probably suffer the most; but they won't be alone.

In the short term, the world economy would face slower economic growth and the risk of greater financial instability. In the longer term, it would confront the threat of systemic fragmentation and proliferating trade wars.

(Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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