

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

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Managing Population in a State

There is no short cut to or any spontaneous method to decrease the number of people in a particular community and adjust them with the available sources and resources of the country. On the other hand, however, it requires a long-term planning with an effective and an efficient organization on the country level to make the people conscious about the rapid growth of population and to change their old values about the family and marriage. In the western countries and in some of the neighboring countries such organized programs like family planning are going on for better planning of population and resources. According to the prevailing conditions, family planning is the only remedy which can help people as well as the government to lead a prosperous and richer life in better ways.

The concept of family planning is not clear for a layman. Family planning does not imply the absence of children or sterilization, but it is only a low rate or reproduction and nothing unnatural or inhuman. Taking into consideration the prevailing deteriorating conditions of the country and masses as a whole, family planning can be one of the main solutions. Family planning can be an effective measure to check the rapid growth of population and provide a happy life both for the parents and children. Family planning is nothing but planned parenthood, i.e., reproduction of the children with a reasonable interval between the first and the second baby without affecting the health of the mother and socio-economic stability of the family unit. The number of children in the family should be according to its resources and it should not be too large to make proper socialization and education of the children difficult for the parents.

It is vital to understand that high population growth exerts pressure on national efforts for future economic growth and development and simultaneously diverts resources from productive uses to more consumption and creates greater demand for more and more civic amenities. Therefore, it is important to adopt a comprehensive national policy to deal with the situation of rapid growth of population so that both the nation and the individuals benefit from it.

Population planning is certainly beneficial to the families with low income, less literacy, already too many children and such other disturbing socio-economic characteristics. In all parts of the world including urban and rural people, economic reasons for adopting family planning seem to be more convincing in comparison to the other advantages in support of planning. For example, the head of the rural family is faced with the problem of dividing up his small holding of land among his large number of children. While in a poor family, it is obvious that each new baby increases the burden on parents. Among those in somewhat higher economic circumstances, interest naturally develops for a better life and education for the children. In cities, household appliances and other comforts are desired. All these facilities are difficult or impossible to attain for a large family except in families enjoying the highest economic status. The same kind of effects can be seen for the nation as a whole.

Then there are many health benefits as well that are attached to family planning. The women who are benefitting from this sort of planning tend to have better health. Enough time period during the two consecutive babies supports women in gaining enough energy. Then it should also be taken note of that there are higher chances of mortality in case of females during the child bearing period. Repeated pregnancies break down the health of women, weaken them and result in their deaths. The women are more likely to die during child birth if they have more babies. And it is more dangerous if they are older in age and give birth to babies.

Moreover, frequent births deteriorate the health of the babies as well. Insufficient diet for the mother and babies effect the health of the babies to a large extent. The health of the father is also affected negatively due to overwork as he struggles to support a large family. On the other hand, sick and unhealthy babies disturb the peace of mind of the fathers as well.

Therefore, it is essential that the families must adopt proper family planning so as to save their lives from different sorts of trouble and give birth and nourish the children who can be positive members of the society. Few may suggest that family planning is not acceptable in Islam but they fail to understand that Islam is the most recent religion of the world. It not only takes care of the spiritual side of man but also guides him regarding his relations in the world with his fellow humans. Islam demands from Muslims to be wise and take actions that should assist them to spend easy and blissful lives, free of difficulties and sins.



Afghanistan's Women and Desire for Political Power (part 1)

By Hamid Bamik

Introduction

With Dawood Khan's coup in 1973, the situation of Afghan women returned as it was before. The Communist, Mujahideen, and Taliban periods worsened the situation of women in Afghanistan. Afghan women experienced the worst situation during the Taliban era. Although they could come out of the house but could not go freely and had to cover their entire body. With the fall of Taliban's regime in 2001, a good opportunity was provided for women to get involved in various political, economic and social spheres. The new constitutional law amended in 2004 accepted equal rights for women and men in various fields. Many women became candidates for the National Assembly, and some of them won the election and entered the legislative power. The new period can be said to be the best course for Afghan women; despite the fact that violence against them has increased, but they have been able to grow up and gain power in various fields.

The First Steps toward Women's Liberation

Since the formation of Afghanistan until the time of King Amanullah Khan, women have not participated in any field. Women not only have not participated but have also been absent from the public eye. The position of women has been among the four walls. For the first time, at the time of King Amanullah Khan, the status of women in Afghanistan changed slightly. Queen Soraya Tarzi, King Amanullah Khan's wife, appeared publicly on the Independence Day Celebration - 1919, and this move changed the situation of Afghan women, thereafter, to some extent. After that, Afghan women could have been somewhat visible in public. But still, Afghan women were not involved in any political and administrative department at that time.

The first Afghan women's organization - Organization for Women's Protection (Anjuman-E-Himayat-E-Niswan) was formed in 1920 - during King Amanullah Khan era by his sister, Kobra for the purpose of women's advancement and salvation. This organization encouraged women to voice their complaints, as well as advocated for women unity and fought against injustices and oppression of Afghan women. Moreover, Organization for Women's Protection fought for women's rights and freedoms - the right to education, the right to work and rest, the right to individual freedom, individual immunity, freedom of speech, gatherings, political and civic activities, and trips abroad.

With the overthrowing of Amanullah Khan's rule and falling political power in the hand of Habibullah Kalakani, women's situation returned to its former status. The space that was created at the time of Amanullah for the presence of women in public, was destroyed, and women were again kept between home walls. This situation did not change until the decade of democracy - 1964-1973. Though the constitutional law formed at the time of King Amanullah Khan accepted part of the rights of the people and various social groups - particularly for women to claim their fundamental rights, Nader Khan's autocracy had taken away those opportunities from women specifically the opportunities to appear in public.

The Afghan Women's Alliance, another organization with the aim of organizing, educating and enlightening Afghan women was established at the time of Mohammad Zahir Shah (1933-1973). It had twenty members. The Afghan Women's Alliance Organization with the suggestion and follow up of Shah Amanullah's sister, Bibi Zeinab established the High Institute of Women in Kabul. Mohammad Zahir Shah's court allocated a piece of land to this institute, in which kindergartens, schools, cinemas, and workplaces were built. The activities of the High Institute of Women were limited to technical and vocational training for adult women. The name of the institute was changed to "Mirman Tolona" in 1342, under the supervision of

the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Afghanistan. And, its activities focused on further developing the women's movement and their participation in important processes in order to strengthen the position of women in Afghan society.

The Rise of Afghan Women Politics

In 1344 (November 1965), the Afghan Democratic Women's Organization was founded by Dr. Anahita Ratebzad, Soraya Perlika, Kobra Ali, Hamida Sherzai, Momena Basir, and Jamila Keshmand in Kabul. The activities of this group included the demonstration of women's rights. For the first time in Afghanistan, women participated in the demonstrations of 3rd Aqrab organized by the leftist groups. In 1964, some conservative members of the Wolesi Jirga wanted to approve a law prohibiting the education of Afghan girls abroad, but, with the arrangement of women's organizations, hundreds of girls protested against this proposal and considered it anti the constitutional law and equality of Afghanistan rights of men and women. As a result, the Wolesi Jirga has abandoned this proposal. In 1970, the members of the extremist wing of the Muslim youth fired at women and girls wearing a short dress and sprayed on some of them with acid. The organization organized more than 5,000 women and girls in the city of Kabul in a massive demonstration and called for inspections and punishment of the perpetrators by the government. The government also arrested and imprisoned a number of perpetrators.

Provincial women's councils, which are very old women's organizations in Afghanistan and the region, were established during the era of Democratic Republic of Afghanistan's governments. The councils had 165,000 members, 31 Provincial Councils, 25 City Councils, 38 District Councils, and 3100 Primary Organizations. Dr. Anahita Ratebzad, who, in addition to the membership of the Afghan Women's Democratic Organization, was a representative of the Kabul people in parliament 12, played an important role in establishing provincial councils.

Taliban's Regime; the Darkest Era for Afghan Women

Afghanistan experienced a very difficult period in the late 20th century. In the year 1996, the Taliban groups came to power in Afghanistan and circumscribed women's responsibilities to doing households. The Taliban's regime banned women and girls from participation in social, economic, political, and even educational spheres. They merged High Institute of Women and Mirman Tolona and employed male employees instead of women. It is said that the experience of the Mujahideen and Taliban era in comparison with the experience of the communist regimes for women is a far worse experience.

The policy of the Taliban in relation to women did not show a significant difference in comparison with the policies of the previous Islamic state. One can argue that the affairs of women in Afghanistan during the Taliban's era were entirely swept under the carpet both inside Afghanistan and outside Afghanistan. There was little attention paid to the situation of Afghan women by public opinion in the world. Only when the connection between al-Qaeda and the Taliban was revealed, the concern for the burqa women to prepare public opinion in dealing with the Taliban became a widespread issue. It seems that "burqa" has become a policy that has been closely linked to the competition of global powers in the country. However, the dark Taliban regime ended in 2001 by the United Nation Forces led by the US.

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Mexico Gets Its Own Trump

By Jorge G. Castañeda

US President Donald Trump has been the world's worst headache for the past 18 months, and arguably no country has suffered more than Mexico. Of the three main contenders in Mexico's just-completed presidential election, none was as ill-prepared as the winner, Andrés Manuel López Obrador - AMLO, as he is known - to manage the bully in the White House. Nonetheless, the Mexican people have chosen him, and he will have to deal with Trump for much (if not all) of his six years in office.

Mexico's relations with the United States were not a central campaign topic, nor will they figure among AMLO's priorities. But they will surely affect Mexicans more than most other issues.

There are similarities between AMLO and Trump. Both appear to be sincere economic nationalists: Trump hopes to make the US self-sufficient in aluminum and steel, while AMLO seeks the same for Mexico in corn, wheat, beef, pork, and lumber. Both disapprove of trade treaties, although they temper their aversion with pragmatic selectivity: Trump left the Trans-Pacific Partnership, but not the North American Free Trade Agreement (for now), while AMLO says he will continue to re-negotiate NAFTA with the US and Canada along the lines pursued by the current president, Enrique Peña Nieto.

Each man profoundly dislikes the other's country and panders to their nationalist supporters, who occasionally take their deep-rooted passions to extremes. But both know that they must negotiate, accommodate, and conciliate on-the-ground realities.

Despite these resemblances - or precisely because of them - Trump and AMLO are almost certain to plunge US-Mexican relations to new depths of suspicion and strain, as objective factors and subjective fervors aggravate old tensions and fuel new ones. Trade, immigration, drugs, security, and regional issues will continue to dominate the bilateral agenda, and on all these fronts, AMLO will face the most adversarial US president in nearly a century.

On trade and tariffs, while AMLO's specific stances are unknown, many of his economic proposals contradict the letter or the spirit of NAFTA. Establishing floor prices for many agricultural products, and ensuring that Mexico produces what it consumes, runs counter to many NAFTA provisions - and to Trump's goal of reducing the bilateral US trade deficit.

AMLO, who will take office only on December 1, has pledged to uphold the treaty and continue talks to revise it. Even in the best case, however, the changing of the guard will delay any final agreement and ratification by the three countries. In the meantime, Trump's constant threats to withdraw from NAFTA or impose new tariffs - for example, on Mexican automobile exports to the US - will inevitably irritate Mexico's new leaders.

Immigration will probably be an even touchier subject. Trump's insistence on building a wall along the entire border, the rising number of Mexicans deported from the US heartland, Central American migrants crossing Mexico, separate detention of immigrant children, and Trump's diplomatic and rhetorical pressure on all these fronts will not

make things easier. Peña Nieto's kowtowing to the US on most of these matters, ever since he invited then-candidate Trump to Mexico City at the height of the presidential campaign, will logically lead AMLO to distinguish himself as much as possible by standing up to Trump as often as he can, if only symbolically.

Peña Nieto warned that he would use immigration and security as bargaining chips in pursuit of a holistic approach to all issues on the bilateral agenda. He never did. Once AMLO moves beyond his simplistic views and understands the complexity of the issues involved, he will be tempted to do what Peña Nieto dared not. Mexico can use a number of tools on immigration, such as loosening controls on its southern border with Guatemala or refusing admission to deportees from the US unless American authorities can corroborate their Mexican nationality. With midterm elections coming in November, and the 2020 presidential campaign just around the corner, Trump will find it difficult to desist from stoking his supporters' nativist animus.

The war on drugs is at a similar crossroad. The opioid crisis in the US shows no sign of abating, and a significant share of the heroin and fentanyl it consumes comes from Mexico, directly or in transit. Conversely, a growing number of US states are legalizing medical and/or recreational marijuana; Canada has done the same. While AMLO is highly conservative on these matters and opposes any kind of legalization, he will find it difficult to maintain previous levels of cooperation with the US on drug enforcement. The public's animosity toward Trump and resentment of the covert, intrusive, and probably illegal nature of the collaboration instituted by his two predecessors will not easily allow it.

AMLO has insinuated that he believes in some sort of amnesty for small-time marijuana and poppy growers, though not for kingpins. But the line between them is not always clear. The peasants in Guerrero cultivate amapola for the cartels, not for their own livelihood. And the US Drug Enforcement Administration will not look kindly on any backtracking from previous Mexican presidents' commitments to continue waging a costly, bloody, and futile war of choice on drugs in Mexico.

There are other issues on the US-Mexican agenda, of course, ranging from intelligence sharing and counter-terrorism to regional crises such as Venezuela, Nicaragua, and possibly Cuba. AMLO will almost certainly maintain Mexican cooperation on the first set of issues, while retreating to Mexico's traditional and archaic anti-interventionist stance on regional diplomacy. But Trump cares more about security than he does about Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro or Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega, so a real rupture here may be avoided.

The hunger for change in Mexico, and the outgoing administration's incompetence and loss of credibility, probably made AMLO's victory inevitable. Now Mexicans will have to face the consequences of their choice, just as their country - more than most - must face the consequences of the choice the US made in 2016.

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