

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



June 27, 2015

Democratization Leads to Prosperity

Democracy, in the modern world of ours, is considered as the best form of government and most of the countries in the world pursue the same system. However, there are only some of the democracies that have flourished in the best possible way and serve their people in the best way. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that there are certain conditions which are absolutely necessary for the successful functioning of a democratic government.

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

No two human beings can ever think alike, it is natural to come across nonconforming opinions at every step, in every field. True democratic spirit lies in overcoming disagreement through discussion and persuasion and not through intimidation. In a democracy, views are not forced, views are shaped and molded. Democracy inculcates among the people the habit of broad-mindedness and compromise and teaches them to show due respect for the opinions and thoughts of others.

Democracy requires not merely an absence of ignorance but also that the citizens are adequately educated. Proper education will produce a wise leadership and a vigilant public.

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 thread-bare 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 of the country.

A sense of responsibility and a desire to give topmost priority to public interest against 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 heightened. There is no economic security; food is scarce, poverty horrendous and unemployment rampant. Ethnicity and class exclusiveness still haunts our minds! Linguistic differences still create distrust and bitterness. 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 will lead to prosperous Afghanistan.

Diversity – A Call to End Differences

By Asmatyari

It is a wonderful saying; we inhabit a universe that is characterized by diversity. Behold a beautiful garden full of flowers, shrubs, and trees. Each flower has a different charm, a peculiar beauty, its own delicious perfume and beautiful color. The trees too, how varied are they in size, in growth, in foliage – and what different fruits they bear! Yet all these flowers, shrubs and trees spring from the self-same earth, the same sun shines upon them and the same clouds give them rain.

So it is with humanity. It is made up of many races, and its peoples are of different color, white, black, yellow, brown and red – but they all come from the same creator. This diversity among the children of men has unhappily not the same effect as it has among the vegetable creation, where the spirit shown is more harmonious. Among men exists the diversity of animosity based endless ravenousness to own more than one can effort and it is this that causes war and hatred among the different nations of the world.

Differences which are only those of blood also cause them to destroy and kill one another. Let us look rather at the beauty in diversity, the beauty of harmony, and learn a lesson from the vegetable creation. If you beheld a garden in which all the plants were the same as to form, color and perfume, it would not seem beautiful to you at all, but, rather, monotonous and dull. The garden which is pleasing to the eye and which makes the heart glad, is the garden in which are growing side by side flowers of every hue, form and perfume, and the joyous contrast of color is what makes for charm and beauty.

So are the trees. An orchard full of fruit trees is a delight; so is a plantation planted with many species of shrubs. It is just the diversity and variety that constitutes its charm; each flower, each tree, each fruit, besides being beautiful in itself, brings out by contrast the qualities of the others, and shows to advantage the special loveliness of each and all.

So should not it be among human progeny? The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord. If you meet those of different race and color from yourself, do not mistrust them and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather be glad and show them kindness. Think of them as different colored roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity, and rejoice to be among them.

Likewise, when you meet those, whose opinions differ from your, do not turn away your face from them? All are seeking truth, and there are many roads leading there to. Truth has many aspects, but it remains always and forever unity.

In Afghanistan from time immemorial, people belonging to various religious faiths lived in harmony and peace. There are fun-

damental values and traditions in our culture that promote integration among different communities. This was helpful for the growth of a great civilization in the Afghanistan. It will be our endeavor as the citizens of this country to preserve the rich tradition of social harmony among diverse religious and ethnic groups and pass it over to the future generations. Even though communal tensions in Afghanistan are well under control, there is no place for complacency as many internal and external forces are waiting with their ulterior motives sowing the seeds of ill-will.

Human needs can be found as the same everywhere in the world if we look at it from biological and psychological perspectives. Irrespective of the geographic, linguistic or religious differences humans everywhere have common biological needs like hunger, thirst, sex etc; the satisfaction of which is essential for their survival. Similarly man has psychological needs like, need for recognition, need for companionship, need for security, need for prestige etc. the fulfillment of which is inevitable for maintaining sound mental health. Man cannot satisfy most of such needs through his own individual efforts. He requires the assistance of his fellow members of the group in this regard. That is why human beings are considered as social animals. A cooperative integrated society is most congenial for leading a healthy social life.

Religion is one of the social institutions found in all human societies. It assists man to establish and maintain harmonious relationships with the supernatural forces that are believed to have direct influence in the fortunes of man. Moreover religion is one of the agents contributing to the integration not division of society on biased grounds.

For a country to be truly great there must be an understanding and the appreciation of each other's differences and strengths. The quality of the educational system needs to be improved for ensuring peace and stability in the country which in turn would promote national integration. Etymologically harmony means 'binding together' and 'being in concord with one another'. From a sociological perspective, harmony can be understood as a mode of social existence. Communal harmony means living with unity, mutual reciprocity, beyond class, caste, creed and gender barriers. Communal Violence emerges as the consequence of this disturbed communal harmony.

The reality of diversity is divisive and challenging. And when we realize this, we can learn to deal with it starting from our individual's process. Individuals are the center of all problems, especially the conflicts in diverse society. When individuals experience peace, family will experience peace, country will experience peace and the whole world will experience peace. Different cultures in this planet; we cannot assume that our culture is the best and other culture is out of date or worse. Every culture is valuable and acceptable. Harmony in true sense can be installed in society when differences are accepted, celebrated, promoted and respected. This gesture leads to generation of diverse harmony in this piece of land and is a prime requisite of modern and united Afghanistan.

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How Fresh Insurgent Attacks Impact the Peace Process?

By Ewaz Ali Bahrami

In peace processes and negotiations for cease-fire all around the world, belligerent parties demonstrate signs of getting away from Lactive clashes; however, this is not the case in Afghanistan.

After months of differences between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah, finally an agreement was reached to nominate Masoom Stanikzai for Defense Ministry. As Stanikzai was being introduced to the parliament for the position, a huge explosion disrupted the session. The people watched live chaotic scenes of parliament members running for their lives and a thick plume of smoke going up to the sky. The attack claimed lives of a woman and a child and left dozens injured. All the attackers were also killed. The Taliban claimed the responsibility of the attack. In addition, in a new blow of Taliban offensive, the militants took control of Dasht-e Archi and Chaar-Dara districts of Kunduz, posing imminent threats to the provincial capital of Kunduz.

This is while the national unity government of Afghanistan is trying to reach a negotiated peace deal with the Taliban. In an attempt to redefine the Taliban, President Ghani has called the militant groups as "political opponents" of the Afghan government. Along with the group's spring offensive, the Taliban have also stepped up their diplomatic efforts, making trips to, Norway, Qatar, Iran and China. Given the Taliban's continued violence, the question rises that is the peace process with Taliban beneficial anymore, or better say, is the government in any position for an equal negotiation?

The peace process with Taliban was initiated during Hamid Karzai's presidency. The primary target of the peace talks with Taliban was to reach a peaceful settlement for the Afghan conflict. To start the peace process, there was need for an official address for the Taliban. Hence, the Taliban office in Qatar was opened, but was shut shortly afterwards when former president Hamid Karzai criticized the office as a rival embassy of the Taliban's self-declared government. After years of unsuccessful peace overtures, the Afghan war still flames high, and claims lives of dozens every day. The Afghan peace process has never been a bilateral negotiation. Another power was actively engaged in the process; and that was Pakistan. Pakistan is often viewed as having ultimate influence on the Taliban. President Karzai had volatile and often hostile relations with Pakistan, having a suspicious vision of this southern neighbor. In contrast, in order to reach a political settlement with the Taliban, Ashraf Ghani chose the opposite route and tried to narrow the diplomatic gap and suspicion between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He personally visited the Pakistan Army headquarters, and had multiple visits to Islamabad. His approach has cost him politically at home and abroad. The Taliban have continued their violent strategy and are con-

tinuously targeting Afghan government and civilians. Annually, hundreds of Afghan police and army soldiers are killed in battle against the Taliban, as the innocent civilians suffer huge casualties from the war alike. The Taliban have been pursuing a hypocrite policy of shuttling between different countries for peace negotiations and simultaneously engaging in active battle in Afghanistan. In the meantime, Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani have continued calling Taliban as "brothers" and "political opponents" while the Afghan National Army is bearing huge casualties from the war with Taliban. The government has turned a black eye on Taliban's atrocities and has continually ignored the bloods that are shed in battle. In 2011, Burhanuddin Rabbani, the head of High Peace Council was assassinated by a Taliban militant while he expected a Taliban representative for peace issues.

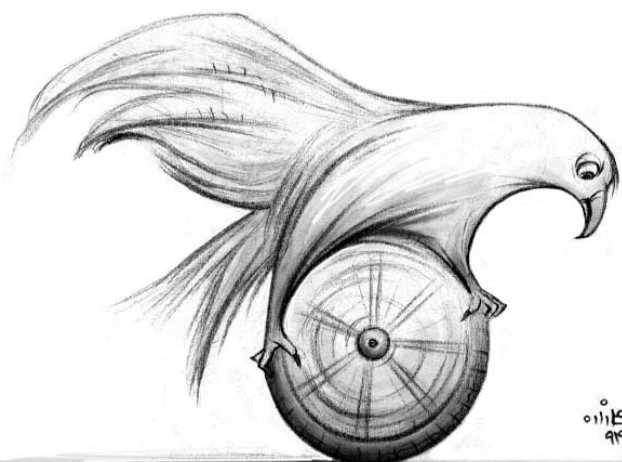
The Taliban are getting powerful day by day as the Coalition troops withdrew from Afghanistan and they seem unwilling to come forward for any negotiations with the government as they are trying to get more power and an upper hand in negotiations. In this very critical moment, the government has to avoid any kind of tolerance policy against Taliban attacks and should engage in fierce battle to crush Taliban uprisings. Kunduz province in the North is a highly strategic province as it is situated in the center of Northern and North-Eastern provinces and it borders Tajikistan as well. The Taliban have huge influence in the province and until last week, it seemed like the provincial capital of Kunduz was falling to the Taliban. The government should eradicate the Taliban from this strategic province otherwise a huge risk is eminent for the Northern provinces.

In addition, the Defense Ministry has the prominent responsibility of carrying offensives against the Taliban and yet the ministry does not have an official minister. The government should introduce the minister as soon as possible to fill this huge vacuum. On the other hand, ANA soldiers' salaries should be paid on time. ANA soldiers have families to support and proper salary will be an incentive from them to keep their morale high and fight.

In the meantime, ISIS is spreading across Afghanistan and it is reported that they have been recruiting people in parts of the country. In addition, ISIS has been executing Taliban militants as well. With the new threat, the Taliban are now facing two opponents and will foresee more pressure. ISIS also has created factions between Taliban officials as some of the Taliban members have joined ISIS. Unless, there is a negotiation between Taliban and ISIS, the Taliban are likely to be weakened more than ever.

A belligerent policy against Taliban will give the government an upper hand and will compel the Taliban to leave the battlegrounds and take a peaceful and negotiation-oriented approach. As the Persian proverb says, "Make them suffer to death and they will be happy with minor sufferings." Now that's the case with the Taliban. As the Taliban see no other option but negotiate or die, they will put their weapons down and join the peace process.

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