

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



March 01, 2017

Time to Improve the Prisons

There are many issues in the country that lack sufficient attention of authorities and, therefore, are responsible for persistent troubles for the country as a whole. Among these issues, the situation of law and order and the justice system to guard the same is one of the most dominant ones.

A justice system should be able to provide timely justice to the people of a country and at the same time it must make efforts to amend the behavior of the people so that they are a positive part of the society. Unfortunately, the justice system in Afghanistan has been lacking the capacity to do so.

Though there are many areas within the system that can be identified as real trouble, the condition of the confinements where the criminals are held is the most dominant one. Jails within Afghanistan are not developed on modern basis; neither they are able to create an atmosphere where the criminals may be changed for better.

In fact, many cases have shown that the environment within the jails is conducive for the crimes to multiply and for the criminals to worsen further. With such a situation in hand it is very difficult to expect that the punishment being given to the criminals would mean something positive.

Recently, a news report highlighted that the prisoners at the Pul-i-Charkhi jail on the eastern outskirts of central capital Kabul have been denying food, as they have started a hunger strike against the conditions that prevail there.

It is not the first time that the prisoners within the jail have criticized the conditions within the jail. Last year a group of female prisoners set fire within the jail because of the conditions that were made to live in.

Several human rights groups have also complained about the substandard environment that is maintained within the prison. It is really important that there should be serious notice of the conditions that prevail in the prison and Afghan authorities must make sure that they are able to play their part to change the scenario; otherwise, the prison may turn into a factory of crimes and criminals; instead of playing any role to stop crime. According to the Holy Qur'an, "All sins can be wiped away by good deeds and repentance, except the sin of disbelief in the reality of the ideal, which contradicts belief in itself".

It is very unfortunate that in our modern society, criminals are dealt or treated like dogs. Their power of resistance is broken by solitary confinement and unhealthy atmosphere, and naturally when they come out of the prison, they are quite unfit to cope with life. Their will-power is broken and they easily succumb to temptation.

Therefore, it is the basic need of the society to find out ways and means to rehabilitate such people to an honorable place in the society so that they may become, useful citizens and show repentance over their past punishment.

Society uses prison as a means of preventing its members from violating both its formal and its written laws, although its confidence in the effectiveness of this technique is not great. There is little enough justification for confidence, for time and again the threat of punishment has failed to keep the members of society in line. Another and unfortunate characteristic of punishment is that often it tells the victims only what not to do but does not tell what to do. It does not build up by the process of reinforcement of a strong positive way of reacting.

It builds up only an avoidance of a certain way of acting. These are some of the possible reasons why punishment may be ineffective. Prisons, therefore, must change the whole concept of punishment. It must have make it effective in changing the overall outlook of the criminals towards life.

Moreover, it must be directed towards the action of the person, not his nature or his personality.

The prisons, therefore, must have a comprehensive strategy and modern techniques of dealing with the criminals.

The criminals must start believing that they have committed something wrong and that there are alternative ways of living life, as well. There should be group activities, encouraging the prisoners to become better and useful part of social life.

They should be trained in the skills of their choice, so that after coming out they can find some work to support them financially. There should be better health and hygiene facilities for them so that they should not be sick and does not become burdens on society. It should be noted that the way prisoners are treated in the prisons, in the similar fashion they will react to the society after the come out.

Therefore, it should be ensured that they have healthy and positive experiences so that they can reflect the same from their attitude in the outside world.

Alternative Politics of Renewal

By Yossef Ben-Meir

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

What does it look like when the local approach to achieving sustainable development projects guides not just how we govern, but is also strategically implemented by candidates to help them campaign and secure elected office? First, let us consider which processes are most effective in advancing community initiatives that meet both socio-economic and environmental needs. From this vantage point, we can see how participatory development procedures translate into broad-based political movements. Public participation in community programs and projects is the factor that most determines whether development-interventions successfully achieve their objectives. Sustainability requires local control in both the determination of priorities – regarding education, health, or the economy – as well as in management and evaluation of development projects.

By facilitating inclusive dialogue and planning, participatory development provides the basis for community-based and institutional relationships and the win-win cross-sectoral partnerships they form to achieve common goals. Critically, these projects are defined by the people (down to their budgets) in rural and small towns and cities, and designed to further their individual and shared interests. A benefit of this process that can be especially harnessed in electoral politics is this: community-driven projects generate trust among beneficiaries, and between them and the individuals and agencies who helped turn their expressed ideas into improved life conditions. That goodwill and commitment is social capital that can launch political action and candidates.

The awesome challenge, however, is to organize across geographic spaces these open and local discussions regarding the needs of the community, and the implementation of solutions. To achieve this requires tremendous energy on the part of a dedicated political candidate. It requires communities that invite engagement and are willing to listen to and share different ideas. To catalyze participatory action, it requires experientially trained local facilitators of community planning. How would this unfold in a political campaign? First, a political party or candidate would organize a series of meetings that involve local people assessing their needs, prioritizing their problems and opportunities, and implementing their plans of action. Political campaigning is then a process by which the people of a given jurisdiction meet, discuss, argue, reconcile, achieve consensus, and embark on a development path forward to meet their human needs.

In essence, the platform of one's candidacy for public office becomes the genuine article of bottom-up politics and change, embodying the development projects of the people themselves. A candidate, able to catalyze participatory interaction across a municipality or state, will not only be in an excellent position to govern if elected, but the candidate will most likely be elected because the platform is a direct outgrowth of what the people have prioritized for themselves and their communities.

Candidates and their campaigns will forge collaborative bonds in the process of assisting communities in generating the data derived from local discussion, so they may then decide and act immediately on what they most want. This also leads to candidates gaining deep

knowledge and insight into the issues of the people and the performances of existing social programs.

Indeed, campaigning this way in itself enables people to have a clear understanding of the kind of democratic governing to which the candidate is dedicated. A promise to rebuild infrastructure, re-tool dislocated workers, improve schools, and heal drug addiction will no longer be just words, but a commitment that has emerged from hands-on experience regarding how improving society actually takes place, and the critical role that local empowerment has in such a process.

In fact, running for elected office in a manner informed by the concepts of participatory development and sustainability is a no-lose proposition. The results of the campaign itself will be numerous, viable, and may ultimately serve as essential proposals for local projects that can then become a bill of legislation before a state assembly, or a national congress or parliament. Win or lose, good shall be done – the campaign shall not be in vain due to this tangible accomplishment. Juxtaposing this political strategy against the two dominant parties in the United States, it resonates with the core ideals of both the Democratic and Republican platforms.

When people participate in and control the social initiatives that impact their very lives, it is true an expression of federalism or state (sub-national) empowerment. It promotes a decentralized system of managing affairs, it champions municipal and provincial or state levels of decision-making, and builds local capacities to create the change that people seek.

At its founding and still today, engendering local control is a primary value of the Republican Party. The Democratic Party would find its identity embodied in this strategy, because of its inclusive nature, which embraces young and old, women and men, the marginalized, the disabled, the less heard, indeed every person who abides in a locale. Furthermore, this approach inherently acknowledges that poverty, inadequate education and health care, etc. are not predominantly caused by the people who endure these trials. Rather, social problems that afflict our lives are rooted in matters of history, geography, decisions of previous generations, decisions made in distant places, our treatment of gender and ethnicity, circumstances of birth, and inadequate human services.

Indeed, alternative politics driven by the tenets of sustainability is a fulfillment of outlooks of both the left and right. It does not compromise the individual for the sake of the community, and vice versa, but rather simultaneously enhances both. Participatory renewal diminishes the separation between campaigning and governing, by way of the electoral process being a series of community actions that would unfold if the candidate or party were in the position of governance.

Most essentially, people need to be heard, needs are dire, stratifications within society and between societies are alarming, and campaign promises often ring hollow.

When a bill for funding the projects of the people is a certain outcome of electoral campaigns themselves, then no words are necessary to accept on faith. But in fact, the actions that constitute a campaign for public office become much less distinguishable from those that characterize governing after victory.

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What Liberal World Order?

By Mark Leonard

After the annus horribilis that was 2016, most political observers believe that the liberal world order is in serious trouble. But that is where the agreement ends. At the recent Munich Security Conference, debate on the subject among leaders like German Chancellor Angela Merkel, US Vice President Mike Pence, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov demonstrated a lack of consensus even on what the liberal order is. That makes it hard to say what will happen to it.

When the West, and especially the United States, dominated the world, the liberal order was pretty much whatever they said it was. Other countries complained and expounded alternate approaches, but basically went along with the Western-defined rules.

But as global power has shifted from the West to the "rest," the liberal world order has become an increasingly contested idea, with rising powers like Russia, China, and India increasingly challenging Western perspectives. And, indeed, Merkel's criticism in Munich of Russia for invading Crimea and supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was met with Lavrov's assertions that the West ignored the sovereignty norm in international law by invading Iraq and recognizing Kosovo's independence.

This is not to say that the liberal world order is an entirely obscure concept. The original iteration – call it "Liberal Order 1.0" – arose from the ashes of World War II to uphold peace and support global prosperity. It was underpinned by institutions like the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which later became the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, as well as regional security arrangements, such as NATO. It emphasized multilateralism, including through the United Nations, and promoted free trade.

But Liberal Order 1.0 had its limits – namely, sovereign borders. Given the ongoing geopolitical struggle between the US and the Soviet Union, it could not even quite be called a "world order." What countries did at home was basically their business, as long as it didn't affect the superpower rivalry. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, a triumphant West expanded the concept of the liberal world order substantially. The result – Liberal Order 2.0 – penetrated countries' borders to consider the rights of those who lived there.

Rather than upholding national sovereignty at all costs, the expanded order sought to pool sovereignty and to establish shared rules to which national governments must adhere. In many ways, Liberal Order 2.0 – underpinned by institutions like the World Trade Organization and the International Criminal Court (ICC), as well as new norms like the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) – sought to shape the world in the West's image.

But, before too long, sovereignty-obsessed powers like Russia and China halted its implementation. Calamitous mistakes for which Western policymakers were responsible – namely, the protracted war in Iraq and the global economic crisis – cemented the reversal of Liberal Order 2.0.

But now the West itself is rejecting the order that it created, often using the very same logic of sovereignty that the rising powers used. And it is not just more recent additions like the ICC and R2P that are at risk. With the United Kingdom having rejected the European Union and US President Donald Trump condemning free-trade deals and the Paris climate agreement, the more fundamental Liberal Order 1.0 seems to be under threat.

Some claim that the West overreached in creating Liberal Order 2.0. But even Trump's America still needs Liberal Order 1.0 – and the multilateralism that underpins it. Otherwise, it may face a new kind of globalization that combines the technologies of the future with the enmities of the past.

In such a scenario, military interventions will continue, but not in the postmodern form aimed at upholding order (exemplified by Western powers' opposition to genocide in Kosovo and Sierra Leone). Instead, modern and pre-modern forms will prevail: support for government repression, like Russia has provided in Syria, or ethno-religious proxy wars, like those that Saudi Arabia and Iran have waged across the Middle East.

The Internet, migration, trade, and the enforcement of international law will be turned into weapons in new conflicts, rather than governed effectively by global rules. International conflict will be driven primarily by a domestic politics increasingly defined by status anxiety, distrust of institutions, and narrow-minded nationalism. European countries are unsure how to respond to this new global disorder. Three potential coping strategies have emerged.

The first would require a country like Germany, which considers itself a responsible stakeholder and has some international heft, to take over as a main custodian of the liberal world order. In this scenario, Germany would work to uphold Liberal Order 1.0 globally and to preserve Liberal Order 2.0 within Europe.

A second strategy, exemplified today by Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, could be called profit maximization. Turkey isn't trying to overturn the existing order, but it doesn't feel responsible for its upkeep, either. Instead, Turkey seeks to extract as much as possible from Western-led institutions like the EU and NATO, while fostering mutually beneficial relationships with countries, such as Russia, Iran, and China, that often seek to undermine those institutions.

The third strategy is simple hypocrisy: Europe would talk like a responsible stakeholder, but act like a profit maximizer. This is the path British Prime Minister Theresa May took when she met with Trump in Washington, DC. She said all the right things about NATO, the EU, and free trade, but pleaded for a special deal with the US outside of those frameworks. In the months ahead, many leaders will need to make a bet on whether the liberal order will survive – and on whether they should invest resources in bringing about that outcome. The West collectively has the power to uphold Liberal Order 1.0. But if the Western powers can't agree on what they want from that order, or what their responsibilities are to maintain it, they are unlikely even to try. (Courtesy Project)

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