

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



March 19, 2016

## 1394 - The Deadliest Year for Journalists

Recently the security situation in Afghanistan has been influencing all the factions of the society but the journalists and media personnel have been greatly influenced lately, or even in the last year. A recent report by Nai, an organization supporting open media in Afghanistan, has revealed in its annual report that the solar year 1394 (March 2016 to March 2016) has been the deadliest year for the journalists and media personnel. The year has also noticed an 85% increase in violence against them.

According to the report, at least 116 cases of violence against journalists were recorded during the year - 64 of them committed by the Taliban, 26 by government officials, one by NATO troops and 21 cases were at the hands of unknown people.

Sediqullah Tawhidi, Nai Executive Chief, said in a statement, "Based on our information and assessments, 12 reporters (including media workers) were killed, 23 wounded, three others were imprisoned temporarily, 15 were assaulted and 63 others were threatened... The journalists in Afghanistan, for the first time, were being directly targeted and that the recent attack on TOLO TV staff had been one of the most shocking acts against media workers ever in the country. Certain elements inside government have tried to influence media and journalists. This has not been seen evidently but it is a fact as we have received some information in this regard."

The report shows some serious concerns regarding the security of the journalists and therefore many journalists even opted to leave the country; few even lost their lives on the way to Europe.

Mostly, the societies that are well developed and have great respect for knowledge and information, make sure that the rights of the journalists are guarded properly and they are provided with such circumstances wherein they are able to perform their responsibilities with full dedication and devotion.

On the other hand, the societies that suffer from political instability and experience wars, and disturbances and do not recognize the worth of true knowledge and information tend to forget the vital responsibility of guarding the rights of the journalists. The journalists in such societies tend to suffer from different sorts of discriminations and, unfortunately, even lose their lives.

Mostly conflict zones are dangerous for the journalists. In order to provide true and timely information, the journalists have to move into or close to the places where wars and conflicts happen. They, therefore, put their lives at risk and try to fulfill their responsibilities. Different groups, organizations or countries in such zones have to be very careful about the rights of journalists and make sure they are not targeted. However, that does not seem to happen and many journalists lose their valuable lives every year. Moreover, because of the influence and approach of different extremist networks, the number of journalists losing their lives in the peaceful countries is also alarming.

Apart from the right to life, according to International law, journalists are entitled for certain other rights as well which all the governments and organizations around the world must respect. Journalists, according to the Declaration of Rights and Duties of the Journalists, must have free access to all information sources, and the right to freely inquire on all events conditioning public life. Therefore, secret of public or private affairs may be opposed only to journalists in exceptional cases and for clearly expressed motives.

Therefore, any factor hindering the journalists from having access to all information sources must be considered illegal and should be eliminated. Moreover, the journalist have the right to refuse subordination to anything contrary to the general policy of the information organ to which he collaborates such as it has been laid down by writing and incorporated in his contract of employment, as well as any subordination not clearly implicated by this general policy. And, the journalists cannot be compelled to perform a professional act or to express an opinion contrary to his convictions or his conscience.

Ill-fatedly, Afghanistan is also one of the countries that have not been giving enough heed to the rights of the journalists. The war and conflicts and the negligence of the relevant authorities have resulted in different sorts of discrimination against the journalists in the county. Afghan government and different other organizations and groups must make sure that they strive to protect the rights of the journalists as they are not a party to the conflict and do not serve anyone's purpose.

Provided that the rights of the journalists are protected, it is important that the journalists must fulfill their responsibilities in the best possible manner. They are required to respect truth whatever be the consequence to themselves, because of the right of the public to know the truth; defend freedom of information, comment and criticism; and report only on facts of which they know the origin of; not to suppress essential information nor alter texts and documents and not to use unfair methods to obtain news, photographs or documents.

## Managing the Politics of Water

By Prince El Hassan bin Talal and Sundeep Waslekar

This year's World Water Day, on March 22, provides an opportunity to highlight what in many countries has become a grim reality: The availability of fresh water is increasingly a defining strategic factor in regional and global affairs. Unless water resources are managed with extraordinary care, the consequences could be devastating.

Last year, the United Nations World Water Development Report once again highlighted how the growing gap between supply and demand could create conflict. The World Economic Forum has ranked water crises as the most worrying global threat, more dangerous than terrorist attacks or financial meltdowns, and more likely to occur than the use of weapons of mass destruction. And research by the Strategic Foresight Group has shown the importance of wise management: Countries engaged in the joint stewardship of water resources are exceedingly unlikely to go to war.

The Middle East serves as a tragic example of what can happen when regional cooperation is lacking. Iraq, Syria, and Turkey have fought over every cubic meter of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. All have lost as a result. Non-state actors control important parts of the two river basins. And water shortages have aggravated the region's refugee crisis (itself the apotheosis of poor governance).

The bitterest part of the tragedy is that it could have been avoided. In 2010, at the West Asia-North Africa Forum in Amman, we proposed the creation of "circles of cooperation," which would have institutionalized collaboration among Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey on water and environmental issues. A similar arrangement would have helped manage environmental resources shared by Jordan, Israel, and Palestine.

If a supranational organization had been created, it could have introduced joint strategies to manage drought, coordinate crop patterns, develop common standards to monitor river flows, and implement investment plans to create livelihoods and develop water-treatment technologies.

Other regions have done exactly that. Countries sharing rivers in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America have recognized that national interests and regional stability can be mutually reinforcing if human needs are given priority over chauvinism.

Last fall, the international community adopted the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which promise to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all." Part of this pledge is a commitment to "expand international cooperation."

Those in charge of implementing this commitment must bear in mind that water cooperation is not merely about signing treaties and holding meetings. It also entails jointly planning infrastructure projects, managing floods and droughts, developing an integrated strategy to combat climate change, ensuring the quality of water courses, and holding regular summits to negotiate tradeoffs between water and other public goods. The Water Cooperation Quotient, a measure of collaboration created by the Strategic Foresight Group, can help countries sharing river basins and lakes monitor the intensity of their cooperation. Out of 263 shared river basins, only a quarter benefit from properly functioning collaborative organizations. It is crucial that such organizations be extended to cover every shared river basin in the world by the SDGs' target year, 2030. For poor people in the developing world, such transboundary cooperation generates significant dividends. When countries agree on the construction and management of critical infrastructure, there are no delays. Costs are saved. Benefits are shared in an optimum way. If all developing countries with shared river basins embraced transboundary cooperation, their GDP growth easily could rise by a percentage point.

The international community should encourage countries to embrace such cooperation by creating financial instruments that make concessional and preferential funds available. A global Marshall Plan for shared river basins might at first seem like an expensive proposition; but the cost of inaction - consider the threat to Europe alone posed by massive refugee inflows - easily could be several orders of magnitude higher. Likewise, the international community should act promptly to save critical water infrastructure from acts of violence and terrorism. Many rivers, including the Tigris and the Euphrates, have been and continue to be cradles of human civilization. The UN should consider creating special peacekeeping forces to protect them.

Finally, international law should be designed to prevent, not just resolve, conflicts. In particular, a robust global treaty is needed to regulate emissions into bodies of water. Today, most disagreements over water concern the quantity parties are to receive. In the future, conflicts will increasingly be about water quality, as irrigation practices, industrialization, and urbanization contribute to rising pollution levels.

World Water Day is the ideal occasion to launch a new agenda for water wisdom. But every day must be a day when we work together to manage one of the planet's most important resources. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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## China's High-Income Future

By Erik Berglöf

What if this is 'as good as it gets'?' Jack Nicholson asks, as he walks through his psychiatrist's waiting room in the eponymous film. At the recent meeting of G-20 finance ministers in Shanghai, participants were asking much the same question - and not just with regard to medium-term expectations of weak global growth. Many are now wondering whether China's current growth rate will be as good as it gets for a long time to come.

Determining the validity of such fears requires understanding what is driving China's economic slowdown. Some offer a straightforward explanation: China, along with other major emerging economies, has become ensnared in the dreaded "middle-income trap," unable to break through to advanced-economy status. But this assumes that some exogenous force or tendency causes countries to become "stuck" at a particular income level - a view that one academic study after another has debunked.

To be sure, countries do often struggle to achieve high-income status. According to the World Bank, only 13 of 101 countries classified as middle income in 1960 had reached high-income status in 2008. Moreover, some middle-income countries, after promising growth, spent decades "trapped" at a certain per capita income level. Argentina, for example, kept pace with the United States in per capita income growth from 1870 to 1940; since then, the gap has been widening steadily. In this manner, even countries that make it to high-income status sometimes regress to middle-income levels.

But there is no historical necessity that dictates that countries get stuck at particular levels of income. On the contrary, studies suggest that fast-growing low-income economies are also likely to become fast-growing middle-income economies, and ultimately to graduate to high-income status. If an economy gets stuck, it is because it has failed to adjust, as the basis for growth changes. And, in fact, the lack of capacity for self-transformation normally would have been visible at low-income levels, too.

What, exactly, does the needed adjustment entail? While the specifics vary across countries, the innovation-focused Neo-Schumpeterian growth theory, proposed by the economists Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt, offers some important insights.

Aghion and Howitt view innovation as any change that leads to the introduction of new products or processes in the market where a firm operates. Countries far from the world technology frontier are better off imitating existing technologies and adapting them to local conditions, but over time such countries must improve their capacity for innovation. Studies have also shown a positive link between innovation and social mobility, and even between innovation and income inequality.

Central to the innovation-focused perspective is the notion that economic growth requires technology transfers and an environment in which new firms can form, grow, and exit (thereby reallocating factors of production to more successful firms). Quality of management obviously plays a key role, but institutions and human capital also matter; corruption, credit constraints, and lack of access to high-quality education all make economic transformation more difficult.

But fostering innovation is not a silver bullet. While providing returns to innovators can help to spur more innovation, it can also allow businesspeople to capture too large a share of the transformation process. For example, whereas Bill Gates has probably been good for economic transformation, the Mexican telecoms billionaire Carlos Slim has not. Encouraging one kind of innovator could easily give rise to the other.

What does all this mean for China? As the country attempts to create the conditions for greater genuine innovation, it must also address myriad short-term challenges. It is caught in a deflationary spiral, with falling prices and increased anxiety over the economy's prospects reinforcing each other. And excessive lending to the corporate sector, particularly in manufacturing, has led to massive excess capacity and a growing mountain of bad debt, suppressing growth.

Compounding the challenge, China's economy is more globally relevant and interconnected than ever before, which means that any action it takes can have far-reaching effects. With tried and tested policies unlikely to work in this new context, the government is having to improvise. And, as anxious markets clearly recognize, that approach carries the potential for policy mistakes.

Nonetheless, there is good reason to believe that China can succeed, given that the country's economic history indicates an impressive capacity for transformation. Of course, China's economy has come a long way since Deng Xiaoping initiated the policy of reform and opening up in 1978. But even in more recent years, the skill content in China's output has improved radically, and resources have been successfully transferred from agriculture to the services sector, rather than to the manufacturing sector, where large state-owned firms still dominate many industries. If the recent research debunking the middle-income trap is correct, China - one of history's most miraculous growth stories - has a very good chance of succeeding in the transition to high-income status with similar vigor. The underlying structural changes that have occurred in China in recent years reinforce this optimism. China will need to continue reforms and overcome vested interests, particularly in the state-owned sector, but its chances of success remain high. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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