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Ensuring Effective Governance

Favorable, fair, and effective governance is clearly one of the most dominant factors for sustainable development. Today good governance is also a key to sustainable development. Honest and competent governance affects every aspect of one's life from the protection of our basic human rights to food and water security. Governance is more than just government, it includes everything from an impartial and efficient judicial system to schools and healthcare, to an economic system that offers job security and a living wage. Its foundation is a strong and vital civil society.

The impacts of poor governance are severe. Ineffective or corrupt governments can allow, or even promote, resource depletion and environmental destruction. They can distort and disrupt local and national economies, impoverishing citizens as well as frightening away investors. In extreme cases, poor governance leads to civil or international conflict. This conflict perpetuates a cycle in which all the components of a healthy civil society are destroyed, and government itself loses connection with its people.

In industrialized nations unresponsive, careless governance produces equally devastating results: the apathy and disengagement of its citizens. People adopt a "why bother?" attitude about politics and government. Stronger institutions of governance can manage more effectively the interdependence between economies and ecosystems. In such a way, capable governance can develop lasting solutions to key environmental issues such as global climate change, ozone depletion, and associated health risks.

There are many ways to strengthen governance. One of them is to create conditions supportive of democracy such as literacy, a free press and flow of information, and gender and class equality. Nations can recognize and train effective leaders at all levels. Pioneering organizations have also created ways of identifying and publicizing corrupt behavior and then insisting on accountability. Effective economic development that benefits all segments of society is also an essential ingredient in strengthening governance.

The benefits of good governance range from an enhanced quality of life for all citizens of each nation to a more responsible, accountable relationship with the environment. A strong and healthy civil society carries with it an almost automatic assurance of reduction in poverty. And, most importantly, the spread of good governance within nations will ultimately lead to diminished conflict and greater possibility of peace between nations.

The three interconnected parts that constitute the governance are the state, civil society organizations, and the private sector. The media also plays an essential role in effective governance by enhancing communication among all sectors.

Key factors in determining the quality of good governance are responsiveness and involvement. Good governance means that stakeholders or beneficiaries feel like they have a voice in what affects them and that their particular interests are recognized. In both the developing and industrialized world, civil society is the most important building block in this process. It is made up of everything from community centers to credit unions to cultural organizations. Governance is the glue that holds a society together.

In prehistoric times, isolated bands of hunters and gatherers had little need for complicated governance. But as people settled in one place and agricultural societies grew in size, legal and political systems grew in response.

The more complicated and diverse the society, the greater the need for effective governance: this could range from an all-powerful monarch to a very inclusive, participatory democracy. Of the nearly 200 sovereign nations of the world at the beginning of the 21st century each has some kind of political system. All the nations of the world have within them components of good and bad governance. Developing countries - many of them former colonies - often have inherited a top-down system of government in which politicians and civil servants see no need to be accountable to their constituents. The result is often system-wide corruption from the lowest village headman to head of state. All citizens suffer as a result, but none more than the poor peasant who has the greatest need for services like health care and education.

Ineffective, corrupt governments do little to prevent resource depletion and environmental degradation. Without accountability to their citizens, they often reach economic agreements that offer short-term profits but have a devastating effect on the local environment. There is also little provision for governmental oversight of the activities of corporations and, even if there are laws and rules to protect the environment they are often not enforced.

Effective governance rests on a dependable revenue base. Without adequate funds to pay civil servants and maintain basic services, a nation risks collapse. Many countries of the world have never been able to rely on tax revenues to meet their budgetary needs. Citizens simply don't pay their income taxes or the government may impose taxes and duties that are inequitable and punitive.

Outside the economic sphere, bad governance impacts the quality of life of everyone in a country, from the poorest peasant to the most privileged. Not only are human rights disregarded or enforced inconsistently, but also essential services as well as adequate food and clean water simply don't reach those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. In matters of food and water security the interests of the political elite are served and the rights of majority often disregarded.

Reactions to Political Prescription of Imran Khan

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Simultaneous with advances of peace process, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, for the second time, prescribed an interim government to skip the current deadlock in Afghanistan. He added that the current Afghan government is creating a barrier to peace efforts. This has faced wide waves of criticism among Afghan the US and Afghan political communities; Zalmay Khalilzad, the US Special Representative for Afghanistan said in a tweet that, "While Pakistan has made constructive contributions on the Afghan Peace Process, PM Khan's comments did not. The future of Afghanistan is for Afghans, and only Afghans, to decide. The role of the international community is to encourage Afghans to come together so they can do so." And John Rodney Bass, the United States Ambassador to Afghanistan said in a tweet that, "Some aspects of cricket apply well in diplomacy, some do not." It is important for "Imran Khan, to resist temptation to ball-tamper with the Afghanistan peace process and its internal affairs."

The former Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, with issuing a statement termed it an "explicit intervention" in Afghanistan, saying that Pakistani officials should refrain from such statements. "We strongly support friendly relations with the neighboring and regional countries based on mutual respect," Karzai said in a statement. "Therefore, we call on the Pakistani government and all other countries to avoid making such expressions and interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan under any means including the idea for the establishment of an interim administration." Amrullah Saleh, the first vice president for the upcoming election on Twitter, wrote that Pakistan has proposed the overthrow of the constitution and the destruction of the democratic system as a way to break the current deadlock. He said this is the cost that Pakistani intelligence wanted to restrain terrorism! Nazifullah Salazarai, Deputy Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the UN, also said in a tweet to Imran Khan in critic language: Mr Khan, stop "Ball tampering" and "Match Fixing" in the Afghan peace process, we know who Taliban flirt with, have an affair and sleep with." Rahmatullah Nabil, a presidential candidate, also wrote on Twitter that the Pakistani PM has proposed an interim government based on the intelligence's request. "Based on the instruction of ISI, the Pakistani PM once again suggested the establishment of an interim government in AFG while the same demand was expressed in Balkh yesterday. It is very likely that the handlers are the same for both, or they think the same for Afghanistan. For sure it is not a coincidence," Nabil tweeted. The Afghan government has been always blaming Pakistan for harboring key Taliban leaders on its soil and providing them with sanctuaries to stage war against Afghan forces and their foreign counterparts. Government officials believe that an interim government in the country was not in the interest of the Afghan people and the country as a whole. Earlier, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah rejected the prospects for the creation of an interim government in Afghanistan, saying there is no possibility for the creation of an interim administration, as it does not support the interests of the country.

Last month, Ghani reacted to reports on a plan to establish an interim

government in the country as part of a peace plan and said the plan has been outlined outside the country and that it is not applicable in Afghanistan. "Those who are afraid of the people are talking about an interim government. This is a foreign scheme and has been outlined outside the country and it is failed in this homeland," he added. "Afghans are selecting the president of Afghanistan," and that "Islamabad, Tehran and Moscow do not hold the right to elect [Afghanistan's president]".

The demand of the Pakistani prime minister came simultaneous to the recent demand of presidential candidate Hanif Atmar in Balkh province, "the current government will end in May, after which a government will have to run the country". He stressed that the term of the National Unity Government, led by President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, will not have legitimacy after May 22 and that Afghans are reaching to a consensus about this. "Our nation is gradually coming to a consensus that the continuation of the incumbent government has no legitimacy after May 22. We do not want anything beyond the Constitution," Atmar reiterated. "We are not seeking to create a power vacuum but for sure we want sincere efforts for peace and elections, not a hindrance to the processes. Therefore, establishing an interim government based on the Constitution will be our top priority so that we assure our nation that peace and elections are coming," Atmar added.

In response to Hanif Atmar's statement, Shah Hussein Mortazavi, the deputy spokesman for President Ghani on his Twitter, described it "dance of interim administration with mechanism of the neighboring." However, Atmar said in a tweet on Tuesday afternoon that he sees Imran Khan's remarks as interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs. "Recent statement by Pakistani prime minister is interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs. The Afghan government derives its legitimacy from the Afghan people, but not from the leaders of regional countries who strive to meddle in our internal affairs and decide on the future of our government and our politics," Atmar said. Meanwhile, John R. Bass, US Ambassador to Afghanistan as quoted said on Tuesday that interim government was not a topic of discussion between US and Taliban negotiators in Doha. "We are only talking to Taliban about two inter-connected issues that directly affect US forces and US policy concerns about the prospect of Afghanistan continuing to be a safe haven for international terrorist organizations," he said. "That is all we are talking to the Taliban about. We are not talking to the Taliban about interim governments; we are not talking to the Taliban about issues related to the current Afghan Constitution and the current structure of government. We are not talking to them about these issues because it is for Afghans, representatives of this society, representatives of the government of wider society, to talk to the Taliban about those issues." Bass added that they have views on those issues and the US's goal is to help produce a settlement that preserves the gains of the last seventeen years.

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Journalism's Risky Tech Attraction

By: Borchardt Alexandra

Technology was supposed to solve some of the world's biggest problems. Connect everyone to the Internet, it was once assumed, and democracy would follow. Collect enough data, and all of our questions would be answered. Put everything online, and algorithms would do the rest. The world would practically run itself. Instead, we now know that digital technology can be used to undermine democracy; that it raises more questions than it answers; and that a world that runs itself seems more like an Orwellian nightmare scenario than a noble goal. But while technology isn't the solution, it isn't really the problem either; our single-minded focus on it is.

Consider the experience of the media industry, where the digital revolution has wreaked havoc on prevailing business models over the last decade. Publishers and editors responded by putting all their faith in technology: tracking all manner of metrics, embracing data journalism, hiring video teams, and opening podcast studios.

More recently, media organizations have shifted their attention toward artificial-intelligence solutions that track audience preferences, automatically produce desired content and translations, alert journalists to breaking news, and much more. In the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism's latest annual report on media trends, 78% of respondents in a non-representative survey of international media leaders said that they planned to invest more in AI this year.

But the final frontier in the quest to save journalism, many believe, is the blockchain - the distributed ledger technology that underpins cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin. That remains to be seen: the first attempt to leverage the blockchain to free journalists from ad-driven business models, by Civil Media Company, had a bumpy start.

There is nothing wrong with using technology to solve problems, including those created by technology, or to give a company a competitive edge. That is what The Washington Post, for example, has been doing in the six years since Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos purchased it (at a time when it was hemorrhaging money and shedding jobs).

But not even the most advanced tech will save the media industry, or anybody else, if there is no regard for the people using it. And that does not mean just audiences. After years of chasing the latest tech trends, the media industry is increasingly confronting burnout among existing management and staff, and a shrinking pool of new talent.

According to the Reuters Institute report, some 60% of media leaders are concerned about burnout on their teams, and 75% now worry about retaining and attracting staff. Another report, Lucy Kueng's Going Digital. A Roadmap for Organizational Transformation, shows that middle managers, in particular, have been exiting the industry.

This should not be surprising. Journalists have always faced pressure in managing the churn of time-sensitive, demanding, and constantly changing news situations. But, in the past, they could at least count on the news organizations that employed them to offer stability and consistency. Now, they must also navigate relentless, tech-driven organizational change - often poorly explained and hastily introduced. The level of uncertainty can drive away even the most loyal staff. To be sure, change is unavoidable; the digital age demands constant

adaptation. But making needed adjustments without destroying morale requires implementing a people-oriented approach. This is not a straightforward process. For tech solutions, managers can attend shiny digital conferences, take some sales team's advice, sign a contract, and dump the new tools on their newsrooms. With people, they have to listen carefully, acquire an in-depth understanding of the problem, and then devise their own strategy.

A good place to start is leadership. In any industry, the key responsibilities of an organization's leaders include making their employees feel secure and appreciated. That means paying attention to employees' needs and fostering an organizational culture that provides them with a sense of belonging and purpose.

A similar approach must be applied to audiences. Not even the most accurate metrics can provide the needed guidance, if nobody understands what they actually mean, why they were chosen, or what their psychological impact would be (on audiences or staff). While data can deliver useful insights about audience preferences, listening to people can lead to very different impressions and conclusions.

For example, the data might show that more content means more page views; but if audiences long for fewer distractions and higher-quality reporting, flooding the market with robot-produced content will not satisfy them. Likewise, users might click on a larger share of articles if algorithms are used to personalize their experience; but if users become bored by the same topics and perspectives, personalization will not help.

Tech-based solutions are a means, not an end. That is why The New York Times, for example, is leveraging its digital success to invest more in journalism. Last year, the company added 120 newsroom employees, bringing the total number of journalists there to an historic high of 1,600.

For organizations without the clout - and digital revenue - of the Times, a people-oriented approach may also be needed to secure investment. With the limits of the ad-driven business model becoming increasingly apparent, many media leaders - close to one-third, according to the Reuters Institute survey - believe that in the future foundations and non-profits will play a central role in supporting the media.

But persuading foundations and philanthropists to open their hearts and wallets will require human connection and engagement, not algorithms or AI-enabled software. Potential funders need to be convinced that journalism is as noble a cause as, say, cancer research.

Technology alone cannot encourage democracy, help answer important questions, and facilitate effective leadership by boosting accountability. But, to some extent, high-quality, responsible journalism can. If it is to fulfill that purpose, however, news organizations must not allow themselves to be swept up by every new tech trend. If they treat technology as more than a tool for implementing people-centered strategies, the people they need - both staff and audiences - will continue to vote with their feet.

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